III

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN TRIBAL AFFINITIES AND RELIGIOUS (ZAYDĪ) AUTHORITY IN THE YEMEN

TRADITIONAL ARABIA is dominated politically and socially by the arms-bearing tribal class and its chiefs. All other classes come under its protection, be they families of hereditary arbiters between them, who share in with the tribes the quality of *sharaf,* honour, or the non-arms-bearing classes of artisans, agricultural labourers who are accounted by them «weak» *(ḍaᶜīf)* and sometimes also «defective in honour» *(nāqiṣ al-sharaf).* In the past social mobility upwards was next to impossible, unless, and this was probably not frequent, through the possession or acquisition of «spiritual power», *(sulṭa rūḥiyya),* though this too is an hereditary quality with which certain families are endowed. The order described is naturally susceptible to some modification in accordance with circumstances, and social mobility downwards, especially loss of tribal standing, not uncommon, but on the whole it appears to have hardly changed over, say, two thousand years.

The important Yemeni tribes in the main are settled, and live in villages, though a few may have nomadic pastoral sections as well. Tribes and families recognise different degrees of social standing as between one and the other; they are not always equal; they are certainly not egalitarian. In not only tribal society but more generally, a family will not consent to marry its girls into a family it regards as lower in the social scale – this can happen when both families have tribal status – and a tribesman marrying into a menial family loses his own standing.

The power and honour of a tribe can be gauged by its ability to defend itself and to extend its protection to other groups. When unable to defend itself a tribe loses in status. A tribe, or section within a tribe, with large numbers therefore tends to have a higher status than another of the group – the books of genealogies will say of such and such a sub-tribe, *fī-him al-bayt waʾl-ᶜadad,* in them is the house (the shaykhly house) and number (of men). Tribes are fiercely intent to preserve their honour unblackened, unsullied – indeed not only is this closely connected with their standing as a tribe, but it affects their security, for a group too weak or inactive to preserve its honour by, for example, defending its protected clients or not avenging a murder, is in danger of exposure to attack by more

powerful tribes and might even be reduced to client status itself. For this reason a tribe with diminished numbers seeks to ally itself with a strong tribe and may even break away from the confederation to which it belongs if for one reason or another the tribes of that confederation fail to come to their aid. As Jāḥiẓ says, the expression of weakness of a tribe leads to the downfall of the mighty/noble (*ᶜazīz*). *Man qalla fulla wa-man fulla ukila.. wa-man ẓafara qatala,* Those who are few are defeated and those who are defeated are consumed.. and he who conquers slays.[1]

As each tribe, itself sub-divided into various sections and houses, is an independent unit, tribal Arabia is to be conceived of as normally in a state of anarchy. A tribesman is secure in his own tribal territory, but without some arrangement for protection outside it his life and property are at the mercy of others. Hence, the tribal law corpus collected by the late Ettore Rossi and me[2] is concerned with protection, truces, the payment of blood-monies and damages, all of which involve the essential function of an arbiter. Where personal or tribal honour is affronted, fines by way of restitution are at least doubled or even heavier penalties exacted. This tribal anarchy in fact is a system that works to maintain security since the sanctions which must inevitably be applied sooner or later for offences are heavy.

Tribes must therefore look for arbiters to settle differences and they must also establish a secure centre where for political, economic and, arising out of this, religious reasons, they may meet on neutral ground. Tribal honour among the shaykhly houses is so sensitive that no shaykh or tribal lord can brook submission to the authority of another, unless possibly temporarily to a *muqaddam ḥarb,* a war chief. They therefore tend to look to an outsider to act as arbiter in their disputes – this tendency indeed runs all through Arabian society. No potential arbiter is more acceptable than the member of a house upon which Allah has conferred some superior and supernatural quality – for who can quarrel with God's authority? Secular arbiters there are, but the theocratic approach to the function of arbitration which brings the arbiter political power seems to suit social conditions better. There are indications that in the south such pre-Islamic rulers as the *mukarribs* were theocratic in type. The arbiter may use his influence to bind together a group of tribes as did the Prophet's ancestor Quṣayy and of course the Prophet himself; in such case they may be described as *mujammiᶜ,* uniter or creator of a group *(jamāᶜa)* - but it is only an arbiter of outstanding personality who manages to achieve this.

As I have stated elsewhere, office in Arabia is at the same time both heredit-

1. «Risāla fi ʾl-ḥakamayn», ed. C. Pellat, *al-Mashriq/Machriq,* Beirut, 1958, lii, Cf. al-Maydānī's *Man qalla dhalla.*

2. E. Rossi, «Il diritto consuetudinario delle tribù arabe del Yemen», *Rivista degli Studi Orientali,* XXIII, Roma, 1948, and my unpublished edition of *K. al-Lawāzim fiʾl-manᶜa.*

ary and elective, be that office secular or religious. A shaykh, sulṭān, imam or *manṣab*,[3] etcetera, is elected from the members of a family which has traditionally held this office. It is recognised that an office-holder requires contributions from the tribe, even if he be a man of means, to enable him to fulfil the duties thereof adequately. One of the most important of these is entertainment of guests and, under one name or another, the tribes pay him fixed duties for this purpose.

There is little love lost between tribes and townsmen in the Yemen. Al-Zubayrī the poet of the Yemeni Liberals in his polemic against the Imams tells us that «when... we examine the sentiments of the greatest force among the populace, i.e., the tribes, those of them who farm — and those who do not, then indeed we find them harbouring a general sense of bitterness against the inhabitants of the towns as a whole, considering the townsfolk, as they maintain, to be sharing with the Imams in the benefits and gains of government, and responsible for its outrages and misdeeds».[4] Al-Zubayrī has given a propagandist anti-Imamic twist to tribal resentment of townsfolk that doubtless long pre-dates Zaydī rule. Nor do city folk love the tribes. «Ṣanᶜāʾ folk are brethren, but not the tribesman».[5] So the Ṣanᶜānī proverb runs, and there are memories of past tribal sackings. The Imams must repair for support to the tribesmen of the high mountains and castled strongholds, but once in power they have to administer from a centre and the towns are centres from which revenue is most easily obtained and to which the tribesman must go for his needs. The tribesman in his *ṭamᶜ*, cupidity, would like himself to plunder the cities, so the Imam becomes the defender of the cities and his first preoccupation is to maintain public security, thus he may turn against the very tribes which helped him to power and he has to treat them lightly in the matter of taxation.

The role of the Zaydī Imams in dealing with the Yemeni tribes is in the continuing tradition of their great ancestor the Prophet Muḥammad in his relation with the Arabian tribes of his own time. Indeed the Prophet in his political role was clearly following established tradition and method, going back, no doubt, to centuries before, but which in any case can be demonstrated, from the Arabic sources themselves, to have been that of Quraysh of Mecca. So, to consider the policies of the Zaydī Imams in perspective it is directly relevant to survey in brief some of the salient features of the political scene in sixth and early seventh century Ḥijāz.

Muḥammad's ancestor Quṣayy had united the tribes of Quraysh and settled them in the sacred enclave, the Ḥaram, of Mecca where they were secure from

3. Lord of a *ḥawṭa*.
4. «The Yemeni poet al-Zubayrī and his polemic against the Zaydī Imams», *Arabian Studies*, Cambridge-London, 1978, 108.
5. *Ṣanᶜāʾ; an Arabian Islamic City*, London, 1983, 168a.

attacks by the tribes. These tribes, known as *muḥrimūn,* one can only assume, gave Quraysh some guarantee that they would respect the inviolability of Mecca. The house of Quṣayy kept the guardianship of the Kaᶜba in their hands and formed a sort of religious aristocracy – Muḥammad was a scion of this house, an inheritor of a religious function, but the branch to which he belonged, Hāshim, also had a function as arbiters *(ḥakam).* Quraysh were settled tribes but they managed to establish a secure caravan system along the main Arabian trade routes so that the Meccans were linked to the celebrated annual trade cycle moving around the Arabian Peninsula,[6] and at the same time they had this special status as Quraysh Allāh, their title even in the pre-Islamic age as custodians of the Kaᶜba. There are indications that tribes paid the Ḥaram some kind of contribution and the sanctuary of course received votive offerings.

Muḥammad's action in breaking with his tribe Quraysh and taking protection with the tribes of Yathrib/Medina is known as *hijra,* usually rendered «migration», and the parallel action of the first Zaydī Imam al-Hādī is sometimes described as his *hijra.* Quraysh regarded the Prophet as a breaker of the unity established by his ancestor Quṣayy, a *mufarriq,* but in setting up a new confederation he became a uniter, a *mujammiᶜ* just as Quṣayy had been. The tribes appear to have regarded the quarrel in which Muḥammad eventually became victorious almost as a dynastic dispute, and it is significant that the members of the house of Quṣayy, his relatives, who had opposed him, joined him and received office.

On his arrival in Yathrib the Prophet had made agreements with the headmen *(naqībs)* of its tribes to set up this new confederation *(umma)* and he was constituted the final arbiter *(maradd)* between the various subtribes there. The *naqīb* is described by Ṭabarī as *al-amīn al-ḍāminᶜala ʾl-qawm,* he who is entrusted/trustworthy, who takes the responsibility for/guarantees (the blood-monies) on behalf of the tribe.[7] One may compare what the poet Zuhayr says,[8]

Ḍaminnā māla-hu fa-ghadā salīm-an
ᶜAlay-nā naqṣu-hu wa-lahu ʾl-namāʾu
I stood surety for/protected his property, so he went away safe.
I bear his loss but he has what it produces.

Zuhayr is here taking pride in his rank rather than boasting of wealth or lofty moral purpose.

The *naqībs* in general represented and were responsible for the tribes of which they were chiefs and they acted in accordance with the customary law of the particular group to which they belonged.[9] It was in conjunction with them that

6. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar,* Ḥaydarābād, 1942, 263 seq.
7. *Tafsīr,* ed. Maḥmūd & Aḥmad Shākir, Cairo 1374/1954-5, x, 110. Cf. al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī,* ed. Marsden Jones, London, 1966, 547 for definition of actions and duties of a *naqīb;* Al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf,* Cairo, 1332/1914, ii, 16-17.
8. *Sharḥ Dīwān Zuhayr,* Cairo, 1384/1964, 77.
9. Cf. my «The *Sunnah Jāmiᶜah...*» *BSOAS,* xli, London, 1978, 21 passim.

the Prophet administered Yathrib, but though protected by Aws and Khazraj he lacked any ready-made power base there and as Ibn Isḥāq candidly shows he would turn their perpetual rivalry to his own advantage. These two tribes of the Aws and Khazraj, he says, «when with the Apostle of Allah used to spring up at one another like a couple of stallions, the Aws not doing anything on behalf of the Apostle of Allah in which there was difficulty but the Khazraj said, «They shall not through this carry off greater esteem with the Apostle of Allah in Islam.» (He said) And they would not stop until they achieved something the same as it. Whenever the Khazraj did anything the Aws said the same as it.»[10]

Ibn Isḥāq[11] tells us clearly that, in deciding their attitude to Islam «the ᶜArab [probably the settled Muḥrimūn tribes] were only waiting to see what happened to this tribe *(ḥayy)* of Quraysh and the Apostle of Allah. For Quraysh were the imam (Example) and guide *(hādī)* of men, and *Ahl al-Bayt wa-ʾl-Ḥaram,* the People of the Temple and Sacred Enclave and pure stock *(ṣarīḥ)* of Ismāʿīl son of Ibrāhīm and the leaders *(qāda)* of the ᶜArab did not deny this... When Mecca was taken and Quraysh became subject to him and he subdued it to Islam and the ᶜArab knew that they had no power to fight the Apostle or display enmity towards him they entered Allah's religion... 'in batches'».

Sometimes the Prophet seems to have supported one tribal group against another as in the case of Farwa b. Musayk of the south Arabian Murād, but history here is still obscure. Where he found it impolitic or unpractical to bring a tribe into the new confederation by persuasion or force, he resorted to the use of part of his revenue to provide a subsidy for its leaders. Qurʾān ix,60 states that *ṣadaqāt* are for *fuqarāʾ masākīn, al-ᶜāmilīn ᶜalay-hā, al-muʾallafa qulūbu-hum, riqāb, ghārimūn* and the *sabīl Allāh,* i.e. the poor, those in charge of collecting the *ṣadaqat,* slaves, debtors and for campaigning. Of the *muʾallafūn,* those whose hearts are composed, Ṭabarī[12] says, «The Apostle used to give them a little *(yardakh la-hum)* of the *ṣadaqāt,* and when he gave them (anything) from the *ṣadaqāt* and they obtained benefit from it they said, 'This is a good religion *(dīn ṣāliḥ)!'* And if it was otherwise they abused him *(ᶜābū-hu)* and abandoned him.» In fact the Prophet, as his power and consequently his revenues grew, quite often gave munificent gifts, as when he presented a hundred camels to Mālik b. ᶜAwf.[13] The cynical tribal attitude remarked upon by Ṭabarī has not changed.

On the other hand the Arabians at large believed firmly in the power of the Prophet deriving from a supernatural source, to do them good or ill. I have remarked elsewhere on his making rain and it is recorded that one of the tribes came to ask him to lift a ban and pray for rain for them. Contact with the Prophet

10. Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh,* ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1858-60, 714.
11. Ibid., 933.
12. Op.cit., xiv, 313. *Khayr,* translated «benefit» can mean «wealth» in the Qurʾān.
13. Ibn Isḥāq, op.cit., 881.

could bring *baraka*[14] and his curse was greatly feared. The curse of God is invoked against the aggressor in the «Eight Documents», 3b (the «Constitution of Medina») and was pronounced by ᶜAlī and Muᶜāwiya against the other after the abortive arbitration. Arabians still credit their saints and holy men with powers similar to those of the Prophet.

The adherents of the Prophet took the oath of allegiance to him and, to take a case in point, the poet al-ᶜAbbās b. Mirdās al-Sulāmī[15] boasts of keeping to it. Personal devotion to the Prophet and to the *Ahl al-Bayt,* the People of the House, the Prophet's posterity, is a constantly recurring theme in Islamic history and an inspiration for both Sunnīs and Shīᶜa. Not only have the *Ahl al-Bayt* a claim to exercise authority as successors to the Prophet, but they have produced many an outstanding personality and they so often possess winning qualities that charm the hearts of men.

Pagan or monotheistic pre-Islamic Arabia had a tradition of theocratic as well as secular government – this form of organisation was followed by the Prophet Muḥammad when he set up his confederation *(umma)* at Yathrib/Medina, and it expanded vastly with the adherence of one Arabian tribe after another. A few centuries later the Zaydī Imams sought to establish a theocratic state in the Yemen on broadly similar lines in a society of basically the same type as that of 6th/7th century Ḥijāz.

Hamdān; Ḥāshid and Bakīl

The two great tribal groupings, both of Hamdān, Ḥāshid and Bakīl, sometimes called al-Janāḥayn, the two wings of support for the Zaydī Imams (though as often as not they have been in conflict with them), have a long history. In the pre-Islamic age they figure for example in the Ḥaram Bilqīs inscriptions.[16] Ḥāshid at Khaywān and other localities were supporters of Ilīsharaḥ Yaḥḍab, king at the *maḥram* of Ṣanᶜā' about the third century;[17] The city of Ḥrmtm is mentioned in connection with the Bakīl tribe[18] and one of the two monarchs called Ilīsharaḥ Yaḥḍab of Marthad was of Bakīl.[19] Maḥram and Ḥrmtm are names suggestive in themselves of sacred enclaves.

When the Prophet was seeking a man to present him to his tribe since his own people Quraysh were preventing him from conveying «the word of my Lord», a man of Hamdān came to him.[20] The Prophet asked if his tribe had the power to protect *(manᶜa)* and the Hamdānī replied that it had, telling the

14. It is difficult to translate the range of meaning of this term - good fortune, etc.
15. *Dīwān,* ed. Yaḥyā al-Jubūrī, Baghdad, 1388/1968, 59.
16. A. Jamme, *Sabaean inscriptions from Maḥram Bilqīs (Mârib),* Publications of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, iii, Baltimore, 1962, index.
17. Ibid., 322. Cf. *Ṣanᶜā',* op.cit., 37.
18. Ibid., 301.
19. Ibid., 308.
20. Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa,* 2nd ed., Haydarābād, 1950, 246.

Prophet that he would present him to his tribe, then return to him – clearly with acceptance to take him under their wing. Meanwhile, however deputations of the Supporters (Anṣār) arrived from Yathrib and no more is heard of the Hamdānī's proposal.

As to how Hamdān eventually came to adhere to the Prophet, traditional accounts vary but a document quoted by Ibn Sa^{c}d[21] was brought back to the Yemen by Qays b. Mālik al-Arḥabī from Mecca to which he had gone to join the Prophet. This document Qays wrote on behalf of the Uḥmūr (Ḥimyar) tribes, Qudam, Dhū Marrān, Dhū La^{c}wa, and the Adhwā$^{\circ}$ of Ḥamdān and their Arabs (or, the Arabs of them (reading ^{c}Arab for Gharb)), Arḥab, Nihm, Shākir, Wādi-^{c}a, Yām, Murhiba, Dālān (of Jawf), Khārif, ^{c}Udhar, Ḥajūr and their associates *(Khalā$^{\circ}$iṭ)*[22] and clients *(mawālī)*. These tribes were to «hear and obey»[23] and the only other stipulations were that they should perform the prayer and pay the *zakāt*. The Prophet made the Arḥabī, Qays, governor over «your tribes the Uḥmūr (Ḥimyar), the Arabs of them and their *mawālī*. Qays was allotted in perpetuity by the Prophet what later would be called a *marjū^{c}* or return from the *māl Allāh*, a portion of the tax which works out at 200 *ṣā^{c}* of *dhura* on 900 *ṣā^{c}* collected from Nisār, and a like quantity of raisins from Khaywān.

Most, if not all of these ^{c}Arab tribes belong to the Ḥāshid or Bakīl groups. Qudam b. Qādim is an Islamic saint[24] with a shrine that has pre-Islamic inscriptions, and Marrān a village in the area – I visited both, but not La^{c}wa which is however mentioned in the *Ṣifa*.[25] All these ^{c}Arab tribes are settled and cultivate their lands and are not migratory or pastoral.

21. *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, Beirut, 1380-88/1960-68, i, 340-1. The document looks authentic.

22. For *khalā$^{\circ}$iṭ* cf. C. de Landberg, *Arabica V*, Leiden, 1898, 116. They seem to be free associates with parity, not protected like a *jār*, distinct from *mawālī*, the latter rendered as «clients» rather than «allies».

23. *Al-sam^{c} wa-$^{\circ}$l-ṭā^{c}a*. Abū ^{c}Ubayda, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, Cairo, n.d., 219, «As for the *hijra* of the *bādī* it is his duty to respond when he is summoned *(du^{c}iya)* and that he should obey *(yuṭī^{c})* when ordered». This use of *hijra* comes very near that sense used in the Yemen. The *bādī* is the tribal country dweller. A distinction is made between the *bādī* and the *A^{c}rāb*, the Tradition being found in al-Nasā$^{\circ}$ī and Ibn Ḥanbal. ^{c}Ā$^{\circ}$isha mentioned the A^{c}rāb in the Prophet's presence and he said, «O ^{c}Ā'isha, they are not A^{c}rāb. They are the people of our *bādiya* (steppe) and we are the people of their *ḥāḍira* (cultivated land and villages). When they are summoned they respond, and they are not A^{c}rāb».
Al-Ḥajjāj called the Syrians *ahl al-sam^{c} wa-$^{\circ}$l-ṭā^{c}a*. See Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic literary papyri, III, Language and literature*, Chicago, 1972, 82, quoting Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, especially, ii, 1134, which says the Syrians *lam yukhālifū ṭā^{c}ata*. She also quotes Mas^{c}ūdī, *Murūj*, v, 454, as stating that the South Arabians had a low opinion of the Syrians as arbiters and people of the lower classes.

24. See E. Griffini, «Il poemetto di Qudam Ben Qādim», *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, vii, Roma, 1916-18. Qudam is the eponymous ancestor of a Ḥāshid group and the poem attributed to him of some importance.

25. Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-^{c}Arab*, Leiden, 1884-91, 66. Cf. *Iklīl X*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, Cairo, 1368, index, and for Hamdān in general.

ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, al-Masᶜūdī[26] informs us, had in one day induced Hamdān to accept Islam at his hands and the rest of the Yemen followed. It does not however seem to have been so simple as this! Yet at Ṣiffīn a Hamdān shaykh testifies that the Yemeni tribes of southern Iraq support ᶜAlī against Muᶜāwiya, declaiming extempore,

O come to Bakīl's aid, Lakhm of it and Ḥāshid,
My soul be your ransom, thrust with spear, slash with sword[27].

So also in the 3rd century it is with a tribe of Hamdān that the first Zaydī Imam, al-Hādī, based himself at Ṣaᶜda, and Duᶜām[28] his most prominent supporter, was a Hamdānī of the Arhābī tribe.

Al-Hādī ila ʾl-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn; the first Zaydī Imām

Al-Hādī Yaḥyā, a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad through the union of his daughter Fāṭima with his cousin ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was the founder of the Zaydī imamate of the Yemen destined to endure over a thousand years, though with greatly varying fortunes. He belonged to that branch of the House of ᶜAlī descended from the latter's son al-Ḥasan, whereas the ᶜAlawīs in Ḥaḍramawt are descended from his other son Ḥusayn. They are known as Sayyids or Ashrāf, these titles used more or less interchangeably for either of the two branches. Al-Hādī was evidently a sayyid of outstanding quality. Physically strong and courageous, he was furthermore, as the histories and works of *fiqh* affirm, competent in the fields of politics and administration. The Zaydī rite derives its name from a descendant of ᶜAlī b. Zayd b. ᶜAlī, who came out in rebellion against the Umayyad caliphs, demand «enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, *al-amr bi-ʾl-maᶜrūf wa-ʾl-nahy ᶜani ʾl-munkar*». The Zaydī rite, with the positive attitude which this imposes, was suited to society in warlike Yemen in a way in which the quietism and religious dissimulation *(taqiyya)* of the main Shīᶜa sects was not. Al-Hādī visited Zaydī Ṭabaristān but found it politic to leave and first came to the Yemen in 280/893/4 «until disobedience was shown by them to his orders which were in consonance with pure *sharīᶜa*»[29] - a punishment he gave for wine-drinking seems to have displeased the Yemenis and led to his departure.

The *Sayyids* and *Ashrāf,* and not least the Zaydī Imāms, are the bearers of *sharīᶜa* law as formulated by the jurists in the Holy Cities, Iraq and Syria. Born in Medina, al-Hādī, founder of the Hādawī school of Zaydī *fiqh,* was well placed to absorb family traditions on the Prophet's political practice and the law he exercised - he relied on his own opinion *(ijtihād)* to a large extent, a characteristic of

26. *Al-Tanbīh,* BGA viii, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1894, 274.
27. A. J. Arberry & C.F. Beckingham, *Religion in the Middle East,* ii, Cambridge, 1969, «The Zaydīs», 286. Cf. ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad al-ᶜAbbāsī al-ᶜAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī ila ʾl-Ḥaqq,* ed. Suhayl Zakkār, Beirut, 1392/1972, 184.
28. This seems the better reading than Daᶜᶜām.
29. Cf. «A Zaidī manual of *ḥisba* of the 3rd century (H.)», *RSO,* ccviii, 1957, 1-34.

the Zaydī school. (It is the writer's view that the law and practice of the Prophet and his four immediate successors were basically Arabian custom, though they with little modifications underwent significant re-interpretation, not to say alteration, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries).

In the Arabian Peninsula law, custom and morals among the tribes and country districts undoubtedly continued much as they were before the appearance of Muḥammad, and the northern Yemen in which al-Hādī arrived had scarcely changed from the days of paganism - indeed this has remained much the case in parts of southern Arabia till our own time. This is expressed by van Arendonk[30] in reverse, as it were. «L'Islam de la population paraît avoir été très défectueux». Actually it was scarcely islamized at all! As already seen the Prophet only stipulated that Hamdān perform the prayer and pay the *zakāt* tax — they had also of course to break politically with those who would not accept Allāh's authority, i.e. as exercised by the Prophet, and in the latter case, as his power grew, the Prophet would grant them security. The tribal leaders were often the collectors of tax, and it is significant that the question of tax was often the motive for the «Apostacy» after the Prophet's death. The cities were the centres of islamization and Ṣanᶜāᵓ even participated at least to some extent in the formulation of Islam, having some notable early Traditionists,[31] but this can hardly have affected the countryside. Al-Hādī even had to instruct in how to perform the prayer - and I found my own soldiers when stationed in Ṣubayḥī tribal territory in 1940 showing the villagers the way to pray of which they had been ignorant.

The most flagrant contravention of the Islamic code lay in the attitude to sexual morality which appears to have remained as pagan as it was in the Jāhiliyya. It may be argued that al-Duᶜām's soldiers, «profligates drinking wine, mounting males and fornicating publicly with women» were only acting as troops before and after them have done, and that the catamite[32] indulging in orgies with men and women is not unknown elsewhere (al-Hādī had him decapitated and his corpse hung up), but the *Sīrat al-Hādī*[33] describes a situation apparently accepted as normal to Yemenite society at that time[34].

«Among al-Duᶜām's troops in Bayt Zūd[35] there were four hundred immoral *(fājira)* women fornicating publicly without concealing it. Indeed the soldiers would go to judgement about them to their sultans and governors *(ᶜummāl)*. They (the women) used to gather each evening at the door of their profligate Sultan

30. C. van Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'Imāmat Zaidite au Yémen,* trad. française J. Ryckmans, Leyde, 1960, 137. *Iklīl I,* ed. O. Löfgren, Leyden, 1965, 102, mentions a man with seven wives!
31. Cf. al-Rāzī, *Tārīkh madīnat Ṣanᶜāᵓ* ed. Ḥusayn ᶜAbdullāh al-ᶜAmrī & ᶜAbd al-Jabbār Zakkār, Damascus, 1394/1974.
32. *Sīrat al-Hādī,* op.cit., 213.
33. Ibid., 94.
34. Ibid., 94, and for al-Hādī's tempering his actions, 227.
35. The text's *dhuᵓd* corrected from al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifa.*

and would dance in front of him and weave[36] their hair, displaying their ornaments,[37] showing off the beautiful parts of their bodies and wearing the thinnest cloth they could get, to reveal the hidden parts of their bodies. The soldiers would come and when a man desired one he would pay her money (dirhams) in the presence of those there with them. Perhaps she might not go to him that night and in the morning he would go to the Sultan and tell him that his damned woman had not come to him that night, having accepted his money. Thereupon the Sultan would order her to be punished/fined and that she should go to her lover *(ṣāḥib)*». These dancing women recall to me the Maᶜn «gypsies» whom I saw in Dathīna thirty years ago[38].

Again[39] about a day's journey from Khaywān a host would bring his daughter or sister, all dressed up to his guest and she would be with him all day or night and he might even touch her *ᶜawra* while her father and others were present. Ibn al-Mujāwir records similar practices in the 7th/13th century - indeed *tawrīd* provision of a woman as part of the entertainment of a guest has continued in parts of the south to our own time. Al-Hādī was extremely strict and[40] and a Yām man punished for wine-drinking died under eighty lashes awarded by one of his governors. A man of Yuᶜfir and another of Hamdān even came out in revolt against him because he had forbidden them to drink wine and behave immorally.[41] Al-Hādī's severity in regard to customs the tribes did not regard as immoral was a factor contributing to his limited success in the Yemen, though by no means the only one. I have long felt that the notorious poem permitting wine, woman and song, attributed to one of Qarmaṭī poets of ᶜAlī b. al-Faḍl and recited by him on the *minbar* of the Jāmiᶜ of al-Janad with its rejection of Islam and its moral code, is not to be assumed an outright forgery[42]. It becomes understandable as a reaction against Islamic restrictions on practices upon which tribal society took a contrary view and which indeed in the remoter tribal areas still has a different moral outlook on them. In fact al-Hādī's son accuses the foes of the Imām of immorality in the following verses,[43]

We rose with the Book (Qurᵓān) - they called it liar,

36. *Nashara*, probably the same as Ḥaḍramī *tanwīsh*, described in my *South Arabian hunt*, London, 1976, note 109. I have since seen tribal girls in Abu Dhabi dance weaving their loosened hair.
37. Cf. Qurᵓān, xxiv, 60, *ghayra mutabarrijāt-in bi-zīnat-in*.
38. «The Maᶜn «Gypsies» of the West Aden Protectorate», *Anthropos*, Posieux (Fribourg), lvi, 1961, 737-49.
39. *Sīrat al-Hādī*, 125.
40. Ibid., 80.
41. Ibid., 19.
42. Quoted in Ibn Samurah, *Ṭabaqāt fuqahāᵓ al-Yaman*, ed. Fuᵓād Sayyid, Cairo, 1957, 75, listing sources and variants. *Khudhi ᵓl-daff yā hādhihi wa-ᵓ ᶜabī, wa-ghannī hazārī-kī thummaᵓ ṭrabī*. The metre needs re-examination.
43. *Sīrat al-Hādī*, 261.

Turning to musical instruments and drink.[44]
They said, «We cannot do without wines
And sinning *(fisq)* with the secluded girl of swelling breasts.
You prevent folk against their will
From (enjoying) pleasures and desired delights.[45]

(Wine is still secretly made *by Muslims* in the tribal areas which grow grapes in the vicinity of Ṣanᶜā' and drunk by them). The thin veneer of Islam among some tribes is illustrable from the practice of the group which choses one of its number to perform the Ramaḍān fast and he fasts only one day[46]! As an example of the different moral outlook on sexual matters I might cite the treatment of the girl with an illegitimate child and of her lover among the Nakhaᶜī tribe[47].

Obscure as the first few centuries of Yemeni history are, power in the northern Yemen tribal districts undoubtedly lay in the hands of the shaykhs, known as shuyūkh al-ḍamān,[48] in the 3rd Islamic century when al-Hādī arrived there. Like the Prophet Muḥammad he made his entrance as an arbiter endowed with authority from Allāh. The *Sīrat al-Hādī*[49] alludes to the Hāshimis of the early Zaydīs as inheriting the Prophet's position *(maqām)*.

Al-Hādī's biographer[50] tells us that in Ṣaᶜda tribal dissensions had led to losses of many men and the district was furthermore in the throes of a drought. The Saᶜd and Rabīᶜa tribes of Ṣaᶜda[51] of Khawlān b. ᶜAmr came out to meet him where he had camped outside the town and greeted him and he greeted them.[52] He made a moving address *(khuṭba)* so that they wept at his words, unable to contain their emotion, like pilgrims to the Bayt Allāh. Al-Hādī then ordered a Qurʾān *(muṣḥaf)*[53] to be brought and made them swear to one another to leave off dissension and hostility *(fitna wa-ᶜadāwa)* - which they did. He then made them swear to himself obedience and support *(ṭāᶜa wa-munāṣara)*, and they paid allegiance to him on the spot. They also undertook to carry out God's command

44. Al-Hādī was also opposed to musical instruments *(Sīra,* 114), *al-iᶜtikāf ᶜala ʾl-lahw wa-ʾl-mazāmīr wa-ʾl-ḍarb bi-ʾl-maᶜāzif wa-ʾl-ṭanābīr,* as of course were the Ḥamīd al-Dīn in the 20th century.
45. Further immoralities are in *Sīra,* 114, 119, 125, 213; Arendonk, op.cit., 137. A.S. Tritton, *Rise of the Imāms of Ṣanaa,* Madras-London, 1925, 83, notes that there was no marriage rite among some tribes, but co-habitation and when a woman was with child a dowry was fixed; the guest was also provided with a woman. Cf. Landberg, *Arabica IV,* Leiden, 1897, 25 seq.
46. *Ṣanᶜā',* 310a.
47. «The «White Dune» at Abyan», *Journal of Semitic Studies,* Manchester, xvi,i, 1971, 80 seq.
48. See pp. 14, 25, 27.
49. *Sīra,* 174.
50. Ibid., 41.
51. Al-Ḥamdānī, *Ṣifa,* 247, describes Yursam as *musnada daᶜwatu-hum ilā Banī Saᶜd b. Saᶜd.* Nowadays Khawlān is called Khawlān b. ᶜĀmir
52. In the Aden Protectorate when one tribe greeted another, each would each form a long line facing the other and the chief men issue from the rank to greet the chiefs of the other.
53. Unbound sheets?

and (give) assistance[54]. Al-Hādī now had a power base in Ṣaᶜda and its tribes, for he had arrived with only about fifty men of his own. He had also succeeded in making peace here where the leaders *(quwwād)* of Āl Yuᶜfir had failed. Thus began his *daᶜwā*, his summons[55] to the Book of Allāh and the *sunna* of His Prophet.

The two tribes were now reconciled and God sent down upon them abundant rain which rendered their land fertile, harvests abundant and prices low, their beasts healthy, and they kept the roads secure. These are signs of *baraka*, i.e. al-Hādī's political success was followed and justified by his success in acting as a rain-maker, a quality also belonging to his ancestor the Prophet[56]. As it is said, *«Idhā ẓahara ʾl-ᶜadl nazala ʾl-qaṭr*, When justice appears down comes rain». Al-Hādī then sent governors to each village *(miklāf)*[57] to collect the tax on cereals *(jibāyat al-ṭaᶜām)*. So he now had some revenue with which to build up his Zaydī state, but it can hardly have been much, and he would have to rely on political manipulation. His own small group was composed of ᶜAlawīs and Ṭabarīs from the Zaydī state in Ṭabaristān.

Al-Hādī's subsequent career was one of hard fighting. The Yemeni tribes at large by no means accepted the Prophet's House as their rightful rulers and were guided by their own interests. Though al-Hādī took and courageously defended Ṣanᶜāʾ he was obliged to evacuate it for Ṣaᶜda because he lacked money *(nafaqa)* to pay his supporters and was unable to persuade the citizens of Ṣanᶜāʾ to contribute to his finances. On leaving the city he promised it disaster, rather after the manner of the Prophet himself with his enemies - and so it was, for in 292/905 Ṣanᶜāʾ was much destroyed by the Qarmaṭī, Ibn al-Faḍl.

Despite the reverses al-Hādī suffered, there remained even a superstitious regard for the qualities possessed by the Prophet's House. When the governor of Najrān, Muḥammad b. ᶜUbayd Allāh, was slain an avenger cut off his head saying,

> I have appeased my heart of you, o son of ᶜAlī,
> And I care not after that what should befall me
> From the wrath of God and curse of the Prophet.[58]

54. *Sīra*, 126, **Ibid., 48 seq.**, in his *daᶜwā* at Ṣaᶜda, al-Hādī made it conditional on his supporters to give him «obedience *(ṭāᶜa)* to my command in all your conditions as long as I give obedience to God. And if I do not obey God you are not obliged to obey me. And if I diverge or turn away from the Book of God and the *Sunna* of His Apostle then I have no plea against you».

55. The *ṣārikh*, the call for aid, and so presumably the carrier of the message, was the form the summons took, e.g. *arsal al-ṣārikh fī ʾl-nās fa-ʾjtamaᶜū ilayh*, He sent the herald among the people and they assembled before him *(Sīra*, 99). Perhaps even in those days the herald was a *muzayyin* (see p. 45). For other cases, *Sīra*, 107, 112, 128, 135, 163-4.

56. See «The Yemeni poet al-Zubayrī...», 119. Like the Prophet, al-Hādī used to be shaded from the sun by a cloud when he walked abroad *(Sīra*, 128).

57. *Makhālīf* are rendered as *qurā*, villages.

58. *Sīra*, 378.

The head was taken by a woman who had lost her brother fighting the Imām and she mutilated, roasted and ate it, in true pagan style.[59]

Though the founding of the infant Zaydī imāmate under al-Hādī naturally follows the pattern of the Prophet, unlike his great ancestor he was not able to extend protection in his later years to other powerful groups and attach them to the nucleus at Ṣaᶜda. During the centuries to follow, until the arrival of the Mamlūks who abruptly terminated the mediaeval age in the Yemen when they destroyed the Ṭāhirid sultanate, the Zaydī Imāms ruled their obscure little state of which Ṣaᶜda was a kind of capital. At times they were able to take Ṣanᶜāᵓ and especially in the period of Rasūlid decline, to hold it. It was in heading the Yemeni upsurge against the first and second Ottoman occupations that they were destined to play a major role in the country's history.

At this point it seems appropriate to discuss the concept of *mawadda,* i.e. affection, for the Prophet's House, and the institution, peculiar to the Yemen, of *hijra.*

Mawadda

In Arabic the word *mawadda,* synonymous with *maḥabba,* means «love», and in the literature relating to the Prophet's house, the descendants of ᶜAlī and Fāṭima, allusions to the love for them are commonplace[60]. But a truer rendering of the term *ahl al-mawadda* would be «people affected to» the Ahl al-Bayt in, of course, greater or lesser degrees. Now in the pre-Islamic Sabaic inscriptions one finds the term *mwd* (= Arabic root *wdd* and its derivatives defined[61] as «friend» of the ruler (title in archaic texts) and the verb *s¹twddw,* to consent, agree, come to an agreement. Qurᵓān iii,101 «How do you disbelieve when Allāh's signs have been recited to you and His Apostle is among you. And whosoever has recourse for protection *(yaᶜtaṣim)* to Allāh has been guided to the straight path», is said to refer to the *ulfa* and *mawadda* established between the Aws and Khazraj tribes (on an occasion when their ancient feuds seemed like to break out afresh). Ṭabarī[62] demonstrates that *mawadda* comes near to the terms *dhimma* and *amān,* treaty/bond and security. When one looks again at Qurᵓān, xlii,23, asking for no reward *«illa ᵓl-mawaddata fi ᵓl-qurbā»,* lit., «except love for the relations» (of the Prophet), *mawadda* could have a much stronger implication, and might possibly

59. Ibid., 380.

60. Ḥaḍramī Sayyids are usually addressed as *«ḥabīb»*. The poet Kumayt loved ᶜAlī, but does not blame Abū Bakr or ᶜUmar.

61. A.F.L. Beeston, J. Ryckmans, M. al-Ghul, W. Müller, *Sabaic dictionary,* Louvain-la-Neuve-Beirut, 1982, 155. Beeston informs me that the term also occurs in Minean but with no evidence to show that it has any special sense as indicated here.

62. *Tafsīr,* op.cit., vii, 62 seq.

be closer to «support» or «loyalty»[63]. It is pertinent therefore to scrutinise the use of *mawadda/maḥabba*[64] in the biography of the first Zaydī Imām in the Yemen, al-Hādī.

Al-Hādī in 286/899 went to Bayt Wathīᶜ whose notables had been in correspondence with him and declared themselves affected to him *(aẓharū maḥabbatahu)*[65]. What this implied emerges from the passage that follows. The notables came out to meet al-Hādī and accompanied him into the town *(balad)*.. They paid him allegiance, heard and obeyed *(bāyaᶜū-hu wa-samiᶜū wa-aṭāᶜū)*. «Hearing and obeying» means to respond to his *ṣārikh* — his herald sent out to cry for aid, and to follow his command in battle. Subsequently Abu ʾl-ᶜAtāhiya, the governor *(wālī)* of Ṣanᶜāʾ and its districts *(makhālīf)*, belonging to Āl Ṭarīf who invited al-Hādī to take over power in the city said to him,[66] «Ask me to swear *(istaḥlifnī)*, oh Commander of the Faithful». This al-Hādī duly did accepting his allegiance *(ᶜala ʾl-qiyām maᶜa-hu bi-ʾl-ḥaqq wa-ᶜalā ʾl-ḥaqq waʾl-amr biʾl-maᶜrūf wa-ʾl-nahy ᶜani ʾl-munkar)*. Group after group of soldiers (followers of Abu ʾl-ᶜAtāhiya) then came to swear to «hear and obey» al-Hādī.[67] Al-Hādī was then able to enter Ṣanᶜāʾ.

The obligations that are implicit in *mawadda* are well brought out in verses of Muḥammad b. Ṭarīf al-Wādiᶜī, the Wādiᶜa being a section of Kaᶜb Hamdān.[68] These were addressed to one of al-Hādī's governors after the latter had persuaded the tribe to take an oath to support the Imām.

63. Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, IVA, ed. M. Schloessinger & M.J. Kister, Jerusalem, 1971, 122, gives Ḥusayn's understanding of the verse, «The relationship *(qarāba)*, the right *(ḥaqq)* of which God magnified and ordered to be observed and [which God ordered], with the intention of reward to him [the Prophet]-that affection *(mawadda)* for the people of it (i.e. the relationship), is our relationship, [we] the Ahl al-Bayt».

64. The use of *mawadda* in the sense proposed for Sabaic seems to find confirmation in Qurʾān, xxix, 25, *Innamā ʾttakhadhtum min dūni ʾllāhi awthān-an mawaddata bayni-kum*, You have taken, to the exclusion of Allāh, *awthān*, only in order to come to an agreement over differences. In this connection I would cite the important information of Landberg, *Arabica V*, 146 seq. Current among the tribes of South Arabia he shows that *«ᶜAlī wathan (= ᶜalayya)* est une formule sacramentale d'une grande solemnité. C'est une menace adressée à un autre». *ᶜAlay/nā bin*, with pronominal suffixes to the *bin*, he points out, means «I/we swear that...», and that the parallel expression among the Zaydīs and Muslims of the Yemen is *ᶜalayya qasam*. *Awthān* in the Qurʾānic context above if rendered as «oaths» would certainly make the passage easier to understand. The pre-Islamic Arabs swore by their deities, as in the verse *Bi-Waddi-ki mā qawmī ᶜalā mā tarakti-him*, explained as *bi-ḥaqqi ṣanami-ki ᶜalay-ki (Tāj al-ᶜarūs*, Kuwait, 1385/1985-, i.282). One speculates as to whether the special function of the diety Wadd was connected wih the swearing of oaths of alliance etc. A further Qurʾān passage, v,82, states that the Christians are *aqraba-hum mawaddat-an li-ʾlladhīna āmanū*.

65. *Sīra*, 125.

66. Ibid., 207.

67. Ibid., 67, to compare.

68. Ibid., 287-8.

Then at evening he dismounted amid Kaᶜb in the place of honour brought and loved *(yuḥabb)*, among those affected to him, partisan *(awdād wa-ashyāᶜ)*, supporters *(anṣār)* responding to the Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's House).

Banū Kaᶜb protectors *(ḥumā)*, ceaseless in preventing injustice, with swords flashing like meteors.

...

To al-Hādī they are protective support *(nuṣra ḥāmiya)* never disheartened, against his foes. Whenever he summons them they issue forth in close packed hosts, clamorous!

...

Thus were their forebears with his ancestor the Chosen (Muḥammad).

...

To rise with the sons of the Prophet is the most glorious boast and the pride of the Arabs.

The boast that the Wādiᶜa ancestors fought alongside the Prophet's House is supported by a verse attributed to ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib quoted by Nashwān b. Saᶜīd[69] but not found in *Nahj al-balāgha*.

During al-Hādī's troublous times Abu ʾl-ᶜAtāhiya said to him that «I hope things will return to affection for you *(maḥabbati-ka)*» - here it would be fair to understand *maḥabba* as «loyalty». It seems then that *mawadda* had a technical sense both in the pre-Islamic period and carrying on into the time of al-Hādī, of fealty and support.[70]

Hijra (pl. hijar)

The institution known as *hijra* has been discussed in its various senses in *Ṣanᶜāʾ*,[71] it is related to the sacred enclaves, the *ḥaram* and the Lower Yemen and Ḥaḍramawt *ḥawṭa*. It functions indeed similarly in some ways to the Prophet's *ḥaram* at Yathrib/Medina. Ṣanᶜāʾ is *muhajjara*, i.e. its inviolability is guaranteed by seven powerful Yemeni tribes in its vicinity though its inviolability has often been infringed upon in the past. Perhaps the *hijra* status of Ṣanᶜāʾ should be related to its position as a *sūq* and the *ḍāmin al-sūq* or guarantor of the security of the market, tribe or individual lord/shaykh, to whom reference is made in Yemeni histories and in my corpus of tribal law documents. This inviolability may seem

69. *Die auf Südarabien bezüglichen Angaben Nasʷwān's im Šams al-ᶜulūm*, ed. ᶜAẓīmuddīn Aḥmad, *GMS.*, Leyden-London, 1916, 114.

70. Further examples of *mawadda* are *Sīra*, 200, a Banu ʾl-Ḥārith man of *ahl al-maḥabba wa-ʾl-mawadda;* ibid., 286, Ibn Bisṭām writes that he is *bi-ʾl-mawadda wa-ʾl-maḥabba wa-anna-hu lahu ᶜalā ᶜahd;* ibid., 133 the Fuṭaymiyyūn are *ahl al-mawadda* to al-Hādī; cf. 209, 306.

71. Op.cit., 40b seq.

inconsistent with the frequent tribal attacks made on the city accompanied by rapine and murder.

In tribal law in general, to violate the security of a place of which the security has been guaranteed by tribes, brings extra heavy penalties upon the offender.

Sayyids coming under the special protection of the tribe are called *hijrat al-qabīla* and the Sayyid is respected and protected *(muḥtaram wa-muhajjar)* even from insult. The tribes are at his behest and respond to his summons or cry *(al-qabā'il tulabbī ṣawt-ah)*. If the Sayyid should be attacked the Shaykh will assemble his tribesmen to defend him, and should he be insulted they will bring sacrifical beasts *(ᶜaqā'ir)* to conciliate him and these they will slaughter at his door. As a *hijra* does not fight or take part in any tribal responsibility if he does not wish to do so, he can mediate between tribes. Though I was informed that other classes can be *hijra,* Ḥabshūsh[72] seems to confine the term to those of high social standing only for he says, «the *hijar* have a special distinction and honour *(nāmūs)* with the tribes». Men of religion who are *hijra* are thus taken as *marjaᶜ*, reference, i.e. in matters of law, and become arbiters - the term is equivalent to *maradd* the function accorded to the Prophet at Yathrib by its tribes in the second of the two treaties he made in his first year at Yathrib.

The Sayyid *marjaᶜ* in the *hijra* is described also as *qudwa,* an example, paragon, which term is applied in Wādī Ḥaḍramawt, to take a case in point, to the Sayyid *manṣab* or lord of the *ḥawṭa* at Thibī village. This epithet for the Sayyid arbiter, or some synonymous word, is evidently pre-Islamic for in Labīd's *Muᶜallaqa* among verses on the theme of the protection and justice of which his tribe takes charge, we find,

Min maᶜshar-in sannat lahum ābā'u-hum
Wa-li-kulli qawm-in sunnat-un wa-imāmu-hā.[73]
Of a company for whom their ancestors laid down a way/custom,
For every tribe has a way/custom and example-paragon of it.

The commentator explains Imām as example/paragon *(mithāl)*.

Hjr is a word which figures relatively frequently in the pre-Islamic inscriptions of south Arabia, generally in the sense of «town»,but Ry 508 alludes to «the tribes *(ashᶜāb)* of Hamdān and their *hjr* and Aᶜrāb. Coming between two names of tribal groups it seems better sense to read it as *hijar,* a distinct category on its own, perhaps like Labīd's Imām/paragon, arbiters protected and honoured by the tribe. Again, in CIH 541,1173 we find the phrase *bi-ashᶜābn w-hjr/hijar,*and in a Mārib inscription I think *hijar* may be read in at least one place for *hajar.*

The act of *hijra,* says Ṭabarī,[74] is a man's separating from his homeland and

72. Op.cit., 42a.
73. See my discussion of this verse in *Cambridge history of Arabic literature,* Cambridge, 1983, 123.
74. *Tafsīr,* ix, 113.

tribe *(farq waṭani-hi wa-ᶜashīratihi),* but this does also mean in consequence the adhering to a new group when one breaks with the first group.

Hijra in the Yemen means also an inviolable enclave and there are a great many of these,[75] but the strange thing is that neither in its sense as an institution or a geographical term is it mentioned by al-Hamdānī or any other source known to me until the author of *Ghāyat al-amānī*[76] reports in the year 546/1151-2 that the Zaydī Imām al-Mutawakkil Aḥmad b. Sulaymān returned to his *hijra,* ᶜAmrān al-Khārid, at the head of al-Jawf and here the sultans of Āl al-Daᶜām came to him. There are quite frequent mentions of *hijras* by him after this date, and Yāqūt[77] refers to *hijrat* Buḥayḥ of the Ṣanᶜāᵓ districts *(nawāḥī)* and Dhū Ghabab of the Dhamār districts, neither of these places known to the *Ṣifa* of al-Hamdānī. The two towns in their vicinities are the important northern centres. The author of the *Ghāya* assumes that the nature of a *hijra* is understood by his readers, as of course it would be when he was compiling his chronicles, but it looks as if it was already quite long established in its geographical sense by the 6th/12th century. Whether earlier writers chose to ignore *hijra* in either of its senses for ideological or other reasons, or whether it only acquired a geographical application some time after al-Hamdānī one cannot say - the institution is ancient and my feeling is that the term in both its senses is ancient also.

As, in the course of time, rivalries developed between the various Sayyid houses descended from al-Hādī individuals of them, either in fear of the Imām in office, or in rebellion against him, would flee to a tribal *hijra* for security and raise the tribe against him. This appears to have happened very frequently in the decline of the Zaydī Imāmate during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As the Ḥamīd al-Dīn Imāms, Yaḥyā in particular, were able to achieve a large measure of centralization of power concentrated in themselves, the status of the *hijra* was naturally weakened and its organisation replaced by officials of the Imāmic government, so that in our time far fewer evidences remained of its functioning than in the past. A tribesman who had committed the heinous crime of murdering in the *hijra* would now be seized and handed over to the civil authority. In addition to paying the *diya* he would also have to pay a fine called *hajar* for having committed his murder there. It is to the tribal *hijra* that the Imāms send for soldiers *(junūd)* and for *zakawāt*-taxes, the tithes *(ᶜushūr)* on crops being assessed by the tribal Mashāyikh «on trust» *(bi-ᵓl-amāna)* in the Zaydī districts, and the Shaykh receiving a «return» *(marjūᶜ)* for collecting them. It was also because these *hijras,* guaranteed by the *shuyūkh al-ḍamān* were potential centres of disaffection to the

75. See Ismāᶜīl al-Akwaᶜ, *al-Madāris al-Islāmiyya fī ᵓl-Yaman,* Damascus, 1980, discussing the *hijra* in its Islamic scholarly connection.

76. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-Yamānī,* ed., Saᶜīd ᶜĀshūr, Cairo, 1388/1968, i, 306. Cf. *al-Simṭ al-ghālī,* in G. Rex Smith, The Ayyūbids and early *Rasūlids in the Yemen,* GMS, n.s., xxvi, London, 1974-78, ii,79.

77. *Muᶜjam,* art. *hijra.*

régime that Imām Yaḥyā did all he could to diminish the influence of the *hijras* and their shaykhs, as also of the Hāshimite families themselves. This is played upon for propaganda purposes by the celebrated Yemeni poet al-Zubayrī[78] in his polemic against the Imāmate.

Ḥāshid *hijras* are mentioned below[79]. The *hijra* of Arḥab, which nowadays is counted a Bakīl tribe, is at Ṣirwāḥ[80] which I passed by in 1966 - I was told that «Ṣirwāḥ is hajar Arḥab, their *hijra*», and I have since wondered that as they seemed synonymous, or almost so, to my informant, whether the ancient *hajar* of the inscriptions was the same institution as the Islamic *hijra*. When al-Zubayrī broke away from the puppet government set up in Ṣanᶜā' by Nasser and formed the Party of God (Ḥizb Allāh) he wanted to assemble both the tribes following the Imām and those following the Republic in Ṣirwāḥ of Arḥab - the tribes are assembled by a beacon on Mount Riyām. The Arḥabīs speak of *ḥalīqat Arḥab* the assembly of the fighting men of Arḥab when they *iḥtalaqū*, assemble in response to a summons to war. It seems that in Ṣirwāḥ as a rule the tribes collect, Hamdān (Ḥāshid al-Kubrā), Arḥab, Nihm, Murhiba, Sufyān, Hamdān Ṣaᶜdah, Bakīl. It was commented to me that Zubayrī constituted a real danger to the Royalists, the supporters of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn, where the tribes were concerned, because his approach to them was religious, like that of the Sayyids. The Royalists were more apprehensive of him than of either the Egyptians or the Republicans because they felt the latter would ruin themselves by their actions. It is interesting that the Egyptians, ᶜAmrī and the Royalists are said all to have wished to get rid of Zubayrī, but the evidence is that the assassins were paid by the Royalists. They were captured however and held in detention by the Egyptians and Republicans who seem simply to have them go.

It is to be remarked that the Bakīl tribes, Sufyān, Arḥab, Bal-Ḥārith, Banī Ḥushaysh, Sanḥān, ᶜIyāl Sirayḥ, Nihm, ᶜIyāl Yazīd (of the Jabal), Dhū Muḥammad, Dhū Ḥusayn, and others though they correspond very nearly to the lists in *Ṭurfat al-aṣḥāb*,[81] do not always seem to be located in the same areas today as in the earlier centuries of Islam.

Ḥāshid and Bakīl and the Imāms of the Yemen

Throughout the centuries of political manoeuvre and strife from the days of al-Hādī during the ensuing medieval ages the tribes of Ḥāshid and Bakīl figure in the Yemeni chronicles, fighting now on one side, now on another, often sup-

78. Op.cit., 109.

79. See p. 29.

80. Arḥab, I was told in 1966, is called Arḥab al-Jawd because it was generous with its men *(li'annahā jādat bi-rijāl-hā)* in the fighting with Nasser's troops.

81. Of al-Malik al-Ashraf ᶜUmar b. Yūsuf al-Rasūlī, ed. K.W. Zetterstéen, Damascus, 1369/1949, index.

plying soldiers to the Zaydī Imāms, mostly, presumably, when the interests of both the parties happened to coincide or when the Imāms by playing on their sensitive code of tribal honour *(qabyala)* were able to pressure them to come out in their support. During the first Ottoman occupation they sometimes acted as auxiliaries to the Turks, but they mainly seem to have participated in the process of recovery of the Yemen from the Turks.

Prominent in Yemeni history for over two and a half centuries have been the Mashāyikh of the house of al-Aḥmar[82]. Al-Aḥmar were *fuqarāʾ ʿilm,* scholars, though the term implies rather more than that, before they became Mashāyikh and Ḥāshid gave them their protection *(hajjarū-hum),* this being handed down by inheritance up to our present time. Ibn al-Aḥmar is the chief *(kabīr)* of Ḥāshid and Shaykh al-Ḍamān. The family are Mashāyikh of the ʿUṣaymāt tribe of the Ḥāshid group and are known as hijrat Ḥāshid. Their *hijra* is located at Khamir and al-Qafla near al-Shahāra and they have extensive lands in Ḥabūr, Kuḥlān, etc. They have documents containing agreements that they be referred to in all disputes and that their decisions are to be implemented. It appears that the Imāms of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn had no special *hijra* of their own, but Ḥāshid *hajjarat al-Imām Yaḥyā,* accorded *hijra* status to Imām Yaḥyā, perhaps when his election was supported by the tough Ḥāshid chief, Nāṣir b. Mabkhūt al-Aḥmar. But though Yaḥyā married Nāṣir's foster-sister,[83] the Sharīfa Ḥūriyya, Nāṣir defected along with ʿAbdullāh b. Juzaylān of Bakīl to the Idrīsī of ʿAsīr, because, it is alleged, the 1912 Treaty of Daʿʿān, concluded by Imām Yaḥyā with the Turks, acknowledged that *Mīrī* tax was eventually to be paid to the Ottoman government. Opposed to Nāṣir were Ahnūm, traditionally loyal to the Ḥamīd al-Dīn and ʿĀhim, Ẓulayma, Banī Surayḥ and Arḥab.

To hark back to an earlier period[84], the *naqīb* ʿAlī b. Qāsim al-Aḥmar, along with Juzaylān of Bakīl and others, in the first half of the 12th/18th century, came out in support of the *daʿwā* of Imām al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Isḥāq and clashed with Imām al-Manṣūr al-Ḥusayn b. al-Mutawakkil when they met at ʿAṣir, just west of Ṣanʿāʾ. The Imām contrived his assassination and had his head borne to Ṣanʿāʾ impaled on a spear. Much fighting inevitably followed the murder and insult perpetrated on so prominent a tribal shaykh as al-Aḥmar. Imām Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn was to repeat the action two centuries later when he ordered the execution of the Shaykh of Ḥāshid after the troubles of 1959.

Describing the effects of Turkish rule on the northern tribes, Ḥāshid in par-

82. See my *Studies in Arabian history and civlisation,* London, 1981, (reprints of articles), 228.

83. Imāms would contract marriages with daughters of tribal shaykhs sometimes, to extend their influence; al-Badr I was told at al-Qāra in 1964 did so while I was there. The corpus of customary law treatises includes sections on the obligations set up as a result of contracting a marriage, including mutual defence etc.

84. *Ṣanʿāʾ,* 84a-b; Muḥammad... Zabārah, *Nashr al-ʿarf,* Cairo, 1359-76, i, 539.

ticular, during the second Ottoman occupation, Aḥmad al-Shāmī[85] maintains that, coupled with their chasing out the governors of the Prophet's House and their own inability to crush the tribes, it upset all order there. The result was divisive, he says, in that each tribe turned to reliance upon its tribal group feeling *(ᶜaṣabiyya qabaliyya)* to preserve its own identity against the Turk and also the tribal group feeling of the other tribes around it, aligning itself with its own Mashāyikh - which led to chaos and anarchy. Yet the love of the Ahl al-Bayt ran so strongly in their veins that while you might find them ignorant of the precepts and duties of Islam, yet no one would deny his tribe or comprise on the love of ᶜAlī and sons of ᶜAlī. The situation however had so deteriorated that, while they would make a show of obedience *(ṭāᶜa)*, they would rule themselves according to the dictates of their *Ṭāghūt*, that is their traditional customary law.

After the Turkish withdrawal, «to keep down the heads of possible dissidents Yaḥyā's formidable warrior son Aḥmad was sent to Ḥajja of Ḥāshid country in 1338/1919-20. This town he took and fortified its castles, making it the base of his expeditions against other tribes. He wrested fiefs from the great Mashāyikh, broke the power of al-Aḥmar family, humiliated the tribes of the area and so kept them in subjection that Nāṣir b. Nāṣir Maḫkhūt fled to King ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz in Saᶜūdi Arabia»[86]. As Aḥmad al-Shāmī says, unjust customary law *(ᶜurf)* was abolished and replaced by *sharīᶜa*, women were enabled to inherit (which in tribal customary law they do not) and moreover the tribesfolk were not allowed to stumble about in their error and ignorance, but men and women instructors *(murshid)*[87] were sent to teach them the precepts and duties of the faith. Let it be said that the tribes themselves would see the case somewhat differently and customary law as practised can bring justice where a corrupt qāḍī will not, but on my travels in 1964, 1966 and since, I have often heard praised the security *(amn)* that prevailed in the days of Imām Aḥmad.

In the latter part of Imām Aḥmad's reign when his son al-Badr Muḥammad had been designated heir apparent and the Ḥamīd al-Dīn were divided among themselves, most seemingly favouring his uncle al-Ḥasan for the imāmate, Ḥāshid was with al-Badr, or at least so I am informed, and al-Ḥasan was favoured by Bakīl, Amīn Abū Rās being over hijrat Bakīl as Ibn al-Aḥmar was over hijrat Ḥāshid. It was to Ḥāshid that al-Badr turned in the unsettled conditions when his father was in Rome in 1959, unwisely releasing all political prisoners, including Ḥusayn al-Aḥmar.

85. Aḥmad al-Shāmī, *Imām al-Yaman Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn*, Beirut, 1965, 67 seq.

86. *Ṣanᶜā'*, 100a.

87. Al-Shawkānī states, «It was the duty of every judge *(ḥākim)* in every area to send reliable and competent men *(rijāl umanā' ᶜārifīn)* to teach the people their religion and duties towards God». Ḥusayn b. ᶜAbdullāh al-ᶜAmrī, *The Yemeni scholar Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī al-Shawkānī 1173-1250/ 1760-1834; his life, works and times...*, Durham University Ph.D. thesis, 1983, i.209. Imām Yaḥyā also sent them to the Ismāᶜīlī (Fāṭimī Ṭayyibī) districts for the same purpose, and he had Ismāᶜīlī writings destroyed where they were found.

It is to be kept in mind that the Mashāyikh are really each independent and the function of a paramount chief, apart from acting as chief arbiter, is only to call the whole tribal confederation out in time of war, and even then not all the tribes will necessarily respond.

When I was in the Yemen in late 1966 Dīrat Ḥāshid had agreed to try to drive out Nasserite troops, ᶜUṣaymāt at Mabyan, Khārif and Banī Ṣuraym at Kuḥlān and ᶜUdhar (ᶜIdhar) of al-Maḥābisha. ᶜUṣaymāt did not follow ᶜAbdullāh b. Ḥusayn al-Aḥmar in his support of the Republic but said that he was not to be molested and was to be allowed to remain in his place.

The Zaydī Imāms, 16th-20th Centuries

In facing the task of government an Imām must combine the qualities of a courageous and resolute warrior with those of a scholar, diplomat and administrator. He must be an arbiter of upright character, and he must have an almost encyclopedic knowledge of people, especially of tribes and families with the intricacies of their relationships... let it be said that an Imām, or even a prince, must also be an extremely hard worker, rarely able to devote time to relaxation - and he has constantly to be on the outlook for intrigues of one sort or another, against himself. The house of al-Qāsim the Great has produced some outstanding men who worked to the Yemen's advantage, despite having to act through officials rarely, to a greater or lesser degree, not corrupt, and to rely on military contingents furnished by the tribes whose loyalty may be described as permanently inconstant. There are a few exceptions. The soldiery themselves, as the writer has personally observed, are difficult to control, and largely inspired by a hope of subsidy from the Imām, or, failing that, extortion and plunder, often of their fellow-citizens. To keep his tribal soldiery happy an Imām must be able to pay them, sometimes to bribe them handsomely, so he cannot slacken in his efforts to raise money. An Imām is indeed aided by the tribesman's extraordinary credulity in his supernatural powers which include ability to slay by a curse or other such means. Yet, on occasion, I have heard tribesmen speak out in harshest frankness to princes of the revered House of the Prophet. It is a misfortune when a strong Imām is followed by a weak one. Sometimes there are several claimants from the House itself to the Imāmate - often the deceased Imām's sons. A scrutiny of Zaydī history reveals that, notwithstanding the theoretical principle that any holder with the appropriate qualifications may be elected to the office, it is most frequently a son who succeeds his father. Each pretender has a following from some tribal group he has cossetted - anyway it is not in tribal sectional interest to have a strong centralized government that will «clip their nails» and make them pay taxes. So brother fights brother, nephew fights uncle, order and security vanish, and the unarmed of the craftsmen and farmers suffer. There is no Imām who

has not had to quell tribal lawlessness - often using one tribe to plunder another by way of reward[88].

It was the rift between Imām Sharaf al-Dīn in conjunction with his other sons, about the mid 10th/16th century, and his warrior son, al-Muṭahhar, that largely contributed to the first Ottoman occupation of the Yemen, as indeed it was the family squabbles that led to the anarchy in the 19th century and the second Ottoman occupation. In our own time the rivalry over the succession to Imām Aḥmad, brought about the loss of the Imāmate to the Ḥamīd al-Dīn in the events following the 1962 coup d'état..

The two phases of greatness of the Zaydī Imāmate both followed when the Imām of the age became the embodiment of the idea of liberation from the Ottomans and was able to manage the loose and undisciplined cohesion of the tribes. The first was al-Qāsim «the Great» who, in the first two decades of the 11th/17th century, succeeded in initiating the movement against the Ottomans, but it was his son al-Muʾayyad who drove them from the Yemen and he is as much the hero of the *Reconquista* as his father. Yet both Imāms had difficulty in controlling the tribes, their supporters, and getting them to honour agreements made by the Imām with the Turks The role of a *mujammiʿ*, uniter is no easy one.

When the Zaydīs took Zabīd, Mocha and Kamarān in 1045/1636 port revenues would become available from which to subsidize the tribes - perhaps this provided the economic sinews for the burst of military *élan* that sent Zaydī tribal armies on their career of conquest to the Oman borders during the splendid reign of al-Mutawakkil (ob. 1078/1676). Yet even so great a monarch as al-Mutawakkil had to pay subsidies to tribes like the Duhma and when he cut their stipends they responded by plundering a caravan of the Ṣaʿda merchants on the main route to Ṣanʿāʾ. The conquered territories, even the relatively remote Kathīrīs of Ḥaḍramawt had to contribute at least something to the Imām's exchequer but the ports, easily controllable by the Imām would doubtless be the most lucrative source of revenue.

The decline of the power of the Imāms can certainly be attributed to the fall in their revenues, especially when they lost the ports of their over-extended and unwieldy empire of mountains and tribes. A notable example of a tribal breakaway from the central government was the combination of tribes led by Yāfiʿ but including the Raṣṣāṣīs, Ḥawāshib, Dathīna, Āl Ḥumayqān, Murād, Bayḥān and al-Muṣʿabayn groups which took and plundered the city of Ibb, slaying men and women mercilessly. Though the Imām of the time was strong, he was unable to restore control over Yāfiʿ nor could his successors do so, but even the British never controlled the mountain tribes of Upper Yāfiʿ during the Protectorate period. By the mid 12th/18th century the Imāms had lost Lahej and Aden - Ḥāshid and Bakīl tribesmen were despatched against Faḍl al-ʿAbdalī who had

88. *Ṣanʿāʾ*, 78a.

murdered the Imām's agent in Lahej, but Faḍl slaughtered sacrificial animals (*ᶜaqāᵓir)* in the markets of Yāfiᶜ - this is a form of appeal for help to tribal honour which may not be refused without loss of that honour - and Yāfiᶜ responded, driving the Imām's forces from Aden and Lahej.

Niebuhr remarks on the drop in revenues by the time of al-Mahdī ᶜAbbās, though accounted nearest to the Zaydī ideal of warrior monarch as he was, a follower of the *sharīᶜa,* generous giver and benefactor. Towards the close of the 12th/18th century the decline became more evident and the tribes so uncontrolled that the Imāms had to subsidize them to stop them plundering the country. In the early 19th century the tribes of Barāṭ, a high table-land in the north-east of the Yemen, Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn had become so unruly as to plunder the suburb of Ṣanᶜāᵓ, Bīr al-ᶜAzab. The Imam countered by putting these tribes to the ban in Ṣanᶜāᵓ city and imprisoned their chiefs, tribesmen being taken in the streets and *sūqs* and murdered.

By the thirties of the 19th century the Zaydī Imāmate had fallen into such chaos and decay that in the Ṣanᶜāᵓ region one puppet Imām succeeded another as described in *Ṣanᶜāᵓ*[89] and the tribes did much as they liked. «Northern Yemen had reverted into an anarchy of tribal chiefdoms and little city states under various Imāms with tribal backing. Individual Imāms may have been men of quality and ability but they did not succeed in restoring stability». These circumstances enabled the Ottoman Turks once more expanding into Arabia, to enter Ṣanᶜāᵓ in 1289/1872, but though they had initial successes against the northern tribes almost constant fighting was to follow - in my 1966 travels there time and again villages or castles destroyed by Turkish artillery were pointed out to me.

In 1307/1890 al-Manṣūr Muḥammad of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn house was recognised by the ulema as Imām and went to al-Madān of Ahnūm where he set to sending letters to rouse the tribes already impatient of the Turks - I visited the great fort he built at al-Ahnūm on my 1964 journey. A general rising broke out in 1309/1891-2, the tribesmen besieging Ṣanᶜāᵓ whose unfortunate citizens were regarded by the Turks as implicated with the tribes while, if, under famine conditions, they left the city the tribesmen plundered them of all they had and «if they came across a woman they assaulted her honour». The Imām and chiefs of troops were helpless to check such excesses and so when a Turkish relieving force arrived it was welcomed in Ṣanᶜāᵓ despite the oppression the Ṣanᶜānīs themselves endured at Turkish hands[90].

The part of Ḥāshid in support and opposition to Imām Yaḥyā during the Ottoman period and after has already been touched upon. Carried to power by the Zaydī tribes of the north, Imām Yaḥyā commenced on a reconquest of the

89. Ibid., 89a seq.

90. The Yemenis complained that the Turks regarded them as heretics which they deny, at the same time pointing to the immoral conduct of Turks in the Yemen.

Yemen after the departure of the Turks. «But for the wisdom *(ḥikma)* of Imām Yaḥyā and the *jihād* of his son al-Imām al-Nāṣir (Aḥmad)», says Aḥmad al-Shāmī, «this Mutawakkilite government could under no circumstances have been formed»[91]. This meant overcoming the Ismāᶜīlīs (Fāṭimī-Ṭayyibīs) of Jabal Ḥarāz who had been Turkish supporters in both occupations and the Zarānīq of the Tihāma whom the Turks and Tihāma merchants were forced to pay to keep the roads open. Sayf al-Islām Aḥmad had, as has been seen, turned Ḥajjah into a fortified base from which, after quelling Ḥāshid, he turned to the Zarānīq. He took the port of Ghulayfiqa and the vessels which used to supply the Zarānīq with arms from abroad, and after hard campaigning their capital Bayt al-Faqīh. His courage won their unwilling admiration so they nicknamed him Aḥmad al-Jinnī.

The Dahm of the Mashriq, the north eastern areas, would not submit to the Imām's rule but cut the roads and raided towns. So in 1351/1932-3 Aḥmad camped in Ḥarf Sufyān and set to bringing them to heel. At al-Jabal al-Aswad he built barracks, and he went to Midaqqa - the Ashrāf of the Jawf[92] and the chiefs of Dhū Ḥusayn came in and submitted to him, but Dhū Muḥammad of Barat mountain plateau resisted until he went up by way of al-Kharāb and took al-ᶜInān, its capital, after fierce fighting. He also took hostages from the sons of the Dhī Nūf and Masāᶜīr who raided to Karab and Ṣayᶜar, as security for their good conduct - so that a man could go six days' travel from al-Jawf to Maᵓrib in security and caravans pass freely. In 1947 I recall that Yemeni raisins and almonds used to come to Shibām in Ḥaḍramawt so these eastern routes must have been secure then.

Yaḥyā's expansion into the east and south brought him into confrontation with the British at Aden who had concluded a series of Protectorate treaties with independent tribes which for a brief period had been controlled by the Zaydī Imāms at the height of their power. These tribes are not Zaydīs but Shāfiᶜīs, though this was a distinction nominal rather than real because many Shāfiᶜī tribes on both sides of the Protectorate borders knew little more than the cults of saints that had replaced the gods of the pre-Islamic age. The Shāfiᶜī tribes wished to remain independent of the centralized government of the Imām with its taxes and Zaydī soldiers whose attitude, for instance to the ᶜAwdhalīs, was that they were Dhimmīs, i.e. protected persons of the Imām, like the Jews. Since the British left the Protectorate tribes much to their own devices and even paid them trifling

91. Al-Shāmī, op.cit., 69.

92. Shaykh ᶜAlī b. Mabkhūt al-ᶜIrāḍa told me that the Ashrāf al-Jawf were Āl Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥusayn, but there were also other groups. In Mārib they were Āl Khālid b. Ḥusayn, in Ḥarīb Āl Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn, and in Bayḥān Āl Muqbil b. Ḥusayn, this Muqbil being called al-Habīlī, ancestor of Sharīf Ḥusayn of Bayḥān who played so prominent a part in the politics of the fifties and sixties. His ancestor ᶜAbdullāh b. Ḥamza who was born in Barāqish was Imām from 591/1195 when he made his *daᶜwā* till 623/1226. These are the Ḥamazāt Imāms. See Zabāra, *Itḥāf al-mustarshidīn*, Ṣanᶜāᵓ, 1343.

stipends,they preferred this to Imāmic rule. the Imām had to withdraw his soldiers from Protectorate territory he had occupied but he never abandoned his claim to these territories. Shāfiʿī tribes on the Zaydī side of the border indeed were in touch with the British during World War I and, it seems, might have preferred Protectorate status to either the Turks or Imām. There was no national consciousness among them in those days.

In the days of the decline of the Zaydī imāmate during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Imāms had maintained a regular force of African soldiers, as incidentally did the Ḥaḍramī sultans, no doubt so as to have non-tribal troops more reliable than tribal contingents and as a counterpoise to the tribes. Their uniform was evidently based on that of the Turkish soldier, fez and red broadcloth. So also Imām Yaḥyā maintained a regular army at first with Turkish officers who had stayed on after the end of World War I. There was also a special bodyguard the *ʿukfa* attached to members of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn House; it was composed of men of different tribes, and my impression is that they became attached to the particular prince they were serving and were loyal to him.[93] The ordinary soldier was poorly paid and when in a position to extort something from the ordinary citizen or peasant he would do so. The same of course was true of the slave troops of the Ḥaḍramī sultans until they were brought under control by the British administrators. In the Yemen corrupt officials and hard-hearted Zaydī soldiery pressed hard on the Shāfiʿī districts which were directly administered and taxed, whereas in the Zaydī tribal districts taxes were collected by the Shuyūkh al-Ḍamān, who could obviously not oppress their tribesmen in the same way. *Ṣadaqa,* subsidies, of money and grain, used to be paid by the Imāms to the northern tribes and when a tribesman came in to Ṣanʿāʾ or Taʿizz he got an order from the Imām for some gift or subsidy. As already noted, this was how the Prophet dealt with powerful tribes.

In 1935 Yaḥyā sent ten young men to Iraq for training in various military skills and they returned to the Yemen as officers - those known to me who later became prominent figures were not tribesmen and they included at least one Sayyid. When they returned to the Yemen they were or became disaffected to the Imām's régime.

In winning back the Yemen from tribal anarchy and creating a centralized state Imām Yaḥyā had been greatly reliant on the powerful and able Āl Wazīr Sayyids but he began to place his own numerous sons in key positions and dislodge the Amīrs of the Āl Wazīr from their posts. A conspiracy was set afoot to murder Imām Yaḥyā and elect ʿAbdullāh al-Wazīr Imām - the complicated plot is described in *Ṣanʿā*[94] in outline, but it was basically dynastic or, as Aḥmad al-

93. In 1964 when Sayf al-Islām ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn was murdered at al-ʿUḍla an *ʿukfī* of his bodyguard went mad *(jinnin)* for grief and another said to me that rather my father or brother be killed than ʿAlī.

94. Op.cit., 101a seq.

Shāmī says, it was a revolt of the ulema. Other elements were involved but all realised that the support of the Zaydī tribes could only be won by a Sayyid with tribal backing.

The conspirators had thought to assassinate the Heir-Apparent, Aḥmad, who had been aware of the plot through his spies, and who immediately showed his metal by moving from Taᶜizz to his *hijra* base at Ḥajja and summoning the tribes to his aid. They came in to him from every side with acclamations and threats against his foes. The way in which Aḥmad coerced or cajoled the tribes into action is in itself witness to his strength of character. One day he sent weapons and provisions to Jabal ᶜIyāl Yazīd, demanding that the tribe advance on Ṣanᶜāᵓ, but their Mashāyikh hung back, prevaricating, seeking to profit by the situation to make excessive demands, even threatening to join the Āl Wazīr if he refused to accede to them. They assembled and marched with their tribal chants *(zawāmil)* to Saᶜdān. The Imām looked down on them from his window but as they persisted in their demands he quickly girt himself with his sword and dagger and came out to them, ordering the door of the courtyard to be locked. He then called out the shaykhs' names, one by one, and asked what they wanted. They persisted in their demands for money and new weapons until, in the confusion, the Imām was heard to shout, «You imagine I am weak and suppose I shall only win through you but your ideas have failed and your hopes are dashed. But I need no man - I am only through (the instrumentality of) God upon whom I rely and in whom I trust. I shall get all I want and I shall fill the face of the earth with blood and heads! I shall fight till I win or die a martyr! Be off with you if you want, to Ṣanᶜāᵓ, with your false greed and you'll find money they are sharing out without counting, and weapons they'll hand out among you without reckoning». He then said, «But I shall n't let you go off with *my* weapons. So anyone who wants to leave this courtyard safe and sound, let him hand over his weapons or his corpse will be trampled underfoot». This he said alone, by himself, in a vast concourse. Then he went towards the mansion, the people falling back to make way for him, astounded. Then they recovered and shouted, «We shall die in front of you, Mawlā-nā, whatever way you wish». Turning to them like the experienced warrior he was, he said, «God bless you *(Bārak Allāh fī-kum)* - you are my trusty troops *(junūd mukhliṣūn)*. I cannot neglect you regarding what you need in respect of recompense, praise and benevolence».

The afternoon of that very day the men of the Jabal came with sacrificial animals *(ᶜaqāᵓir)*, asking for pardon for what arisen from them[95].

The way in which Aḥmad brought out Arḥab and some other tribes was to send a certain ᶜAlī b. ᶜAlī al-Faqīh to slaughter four dogs in front of them. This was in order to put the shame on them *(yinakkif-hum)* so as to stir them up, as if he were saying to them, «The blood of people (of nobility) has, in your eyes,

95. Al-Shāmī, op.cit., 95.

become like that of dogs (unclean animals for whose blood, hunting dogs apart, no compensation is sought). It implied that ᶜAlī b. ᶜAlī was saying, *«Hādhā ᶜinda-kum yā Arḥab!»* «If you do not rise to avenge them You are as dogs». So they rose as one man to avenge the murder of Imām Yaḥyā.

Imām Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nāṣir al-Dīn

«Imām Aḥmad Nāṣir al-Dīn was a ruler of tremendous personality, astute, brave, resolute, learned and witty, suspicious, unable to brook opposition, often terrifying, patient but swift to action»[96]. He had a *ṣawt jahwarī* stentorian voice. His rule was much stronger than that of his father[97], but the inimical forces working against him were many and varied - certain great Sayyid houses like the Sharaf al-Dīn, the tribal chiefs of Ḥāshid, Barat and the Mashriq, certain Qāḍī houses, the young officers of the army and many Shāfiᶜīs, but in the aftermath of the 1962 changes there are still many who remember him with respect as maintaining law and order through the country. In 1948, Aḥmad al-Shāmī says[98], the towns were against him, but as already seen, he managed to call out the tribes, perhaps even those with whom he had fought in earlier years and brought to heel. He could and did deal severely with dissidents - he had his brothers who came out in rebellion against him executed - but all things considered he was reasonably clement in the Yemeni society in which he lived. He certainly won the unwilling admiration of the very enemies he had bested. Propagandists have dubbed him «the Tyrant (al-Ṭāghī)», but the well known politician «al-Ustādh» Aḥmad Nuᶜmān who so often opposed him and was imprisoned in Ḥajja after the dynastic coup of 1948, clearly respected him and perhaps, up to a point, was not unsympathetic to him.

Imām Aḥmad had a vast knowledge of tribes, families, and individual members of them which struck them as almost uncanny. He is said to have kept notes and he would not only know the names of those whom he met, but would astonish them by asking such questions as *«Kīf ᶜamm-ak filān, wa-ibnu-h filān»*. To this he might add some personal query in detail. The Prophet himself was well versed in this kind of lore for he is reported to have said, *«Lā sa'ala-nī aḥad al-yawm ᶜan nasabi-hi illā alḥaqtu-hu bi-aṣli-hi,* May no-one ask me today about his genealogy but I shall trace him back to his origin»[99].

The forcefulness of Imām Aḥmad's character can hardly be better illustrated than in his famous fighting speech delivered at Hodeidah in 1959. This speech has been much misrepresented by propagandists against the régime, and al-Zubayrī's riposte is far better known than the speech itself.

The Imām had accidently become addicted to morphine supplied to him dur-

96. *Ṣanᶜā'*, 104b.
97. Al-Shāmī, 97.
98. Ibid., 11.
99. Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl erstes Buch*, ed. O. Löfgren, Uppsala, 1954-65, 67.

ing a painful illness by his Italian physican, and he had to go to Italy for treatment, leaving his son al-Badr in charge. «With the cat away, the mice came out again. The Army in Taᶜizz and Ṣanᶜāᵓ was so restive that al-Badr called in the tribes, fearing the Army might attack him in Dār al-Bashāyir. Tapes of seditious speeches were made and sent with warning letters to the Imām in Rome. The Imām was also given to understand that his son intended to depose him. Aḥmad, now recovered, returned by sea... In Hodeidah he made his stern but rousing speech against those who had been creating disturbance in his absence - some fifty thousand tribesmen brought into Ṣanᶜāᵓ by al-Badr hurriedlyleft it on hearing the speech over the radio. *«Bawwaḥ al-shayba,* The old bull has bellowed», they said. Ḥusayn al-Aḥmar and other northern chiefs now came out in rebellion, but Aḥmad, by political means, including bribery, broke up support for him and he launched many northern tribes against them along with a force of the Regular Army commanded by two experienced Sayyid generals... The tribes and Army quelled the rebellion. Ḥusayn al-Aḥmar's supporters melted away. He and his son Ḥamīd had to surrender and were executed under circumstances not very creditable to the Imām»[100].

I am indebted to Sayyid Aḥmad al-Shāmī who supplied me with a recording of the speech at Beirut in 1969 which I transcribed and checked with him. It was delivered improptu in al-Ḥudayda on August 12th, 1959/Ṣafar 7th, 1379 before the crowds come to receive him on his return from Rome[101] (See Appendixes 1and2).

Imām Aḥmad's unswerving conviction that he acts with God's authority comes out strongly in the Hodeidah speech. Some years earlier indeed this conviction manifested itself when he was besieged in the ᶜUrḍī at Taᶜizz, but broke out of it sword in hand, challenging the besiegers to personal combat with the words, «Do you want to kill your Imām, the Commander of the Faithful? You can't do it! Your Imām is guarded by God». His escape from the intended assassination in the Hodeidah hospital also, when he feigned death, appeared near miraculous. The Imām's certainty undoubtedly impressed tribesfolk and in any case as a tribesman said to me in 1966, the tribes have *iᶜtiqād kāmil fī Āl Muḥammad,* complete belief in the House of Muḥammad. This belief in their House had however, I was told, weakened considerably among the young Ḥamīd al-Dīn princes who went to school in Cairo before 1962 for secondary education in the secularist political atmosphere of Nasserite Egypt and of course the whole position of the Sayyids was under attack from young Yemeni political writers like Muḥsin al-ᶜAynī as well as al-Zubayrī of the Yemeni Liberals[102].

100 *Ṣanᶜāᵓ*, 106. He is said to have executed them when under safe-conduct.

101. In places the recording is unclear, the speech distorted by crowd background noise. Stars in the Arabic text indicate cheering.

102. For instance Muḥsin al-ᶜAynī's *Maᶜārik wa-muᶜāmarāt ḍidd qaḍiyyat al-Yaman,* Cairo, n.d., but about 1957.

Imām Aḥmad in his tough policy with the Zaydī tribes naturally brought resentment from them and in the weakness of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn on his death they were at once prepared to raise their heads again, but the fear of him was so great that, it is said, tribesmen would at first visit his tomb in Ṣanᶜā' to make sure that these terrible eyes were dead and even that it was dug up for this reason.

Aḥmad had made a bid to take over the authority of Nājī al-Ghādir among the tribes of Khawlān east of Ṣanᶜā' for himself. This, al-Ghādir resisted, and the Imām sent his general, *(maqdamī)* Muḥammad al-Ḍumayn of the Ashrāf of al-Jawf, to fight against him and eventually al-Ghādir had to come to an agreement. I have noted the following *zāmils* (tribal chants) on the occasion - Imām Aḥmad used at times even to make a judgment in a *zāmil.* Nājī, who was apparently also something of a poet in colloquial Arabic, said

Yā salāmī shann yā nasl al-Ḥasan[103]
Min lisn ᶜawlah ṣādiqīn afᶜāla-hā.
Qad jīt li-ʾl-ṭāᶜa wa-tahmīd al-fitan
Wa-in ghalabtū bā nafukk aqfāla-hā (rajaz metre).
My greeting pours forth to you of al-Ḥasan's line[104]
From the tongues of gallant fighters with deeds so true.
I am come to obey, to settle the disputes,
But their locks we'll re-open if refuse you do!

To which al-Ḍumayn made the riposte,

Qāla ʾl-Sharīf, Ahlā bi-ṭāᶜat-kum li-man
Amri-h yaduqq suhūla-ha wa-jibāla-hā
Qad al-Habīlī bāᶜa-kum ba-rkhaṣ thaman
W-Iblīs qaffā wa-ʾkhtafā Dajjāla-hā.
Said the Sharif, «Welcome be your obeying him
Whose command strikes both the mountain and the plain.
The Habīlī, at the lowest price, has sold you,
Iblīs abandoned you, Dajjāl is hidden lain.»

Sharīf Ḍumayn's references to the Dajjāl and Iblīs mean the Sharīf Ḥusayn al-Habīlī of Bayḥān (of the same house as Ḍumayn though another branch) whom he stigmatizes as having left the Khawlānīs in the lurch after stirring them up against Imām Aḥmad, but when they sought help from him they did not receive it. Sharīf Ḥusayn certainly was in touch with the Ashrāf of the Jawf whom he even visited, and I think he must have been in touch with and sympathetic to Sayf al-Islām al-Ḥasan[105]. Sharīf Ḥusayn's influence and repute were high in the Jawf area as I learned for myself in 1966.

103. A *waw* at the beginning of this line would make the metre fit.
104. Ḍumayn as a Sharīf is descended from al-Ḥasan.
105. Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, *Shades of amber,* London, 1968, 180. Sharīf Ḥusayn probably expected the attack on al-Badr was by Sayf al-Islām Ḥasan's supporters.

Imām Aḥmad had also been tough with the Dahm in the Mashriq and took many hostages *(rahā'in)* from them and they were afraid of him. (When Nasser's troops found a way of entering the Jawf which was Royalist till then, the Dahm largely turned Republican *(tajamharū)*, but when they were compelled to evacuate the area Dahm became Royalist again *(tamaylakū)* and told me that their shaykhs would visit the camps during the day but fire on them at night). Taking hostages from tribes to ensure their good behaviour is a long established Yemeni practice - al-Hamdānī (*Iklīl* i,93) speaks of hostages *(ruhanā')* from the notables of Rāziḥ. The Rasūlids held them in their northern castles and even budgeted for stipends for them. (The Aden Protectorate Sultans also held hostages and at Khawr al-ʿUmayra fort the hostages of the ʿAbdalī wore leg irons but were otherwise free to move about). I saw the quarters of the hostages in Imām Yaḥyā's magnificent castle at al-Sūda which he used a a base, and the little gardens they used to cultivate. These hostages were not kept in irons. The Protectorate hostages would be close relatives of tribal shaykhs and they would be changed for others when they had served a certain time. It is naturally not exactly a pleasure to act as a hostage, but in my experience it appeared not too much of a hardship either and a useful method of maintaining public security.

Imām al-Badr and the coup of 1962

It was the disunity of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn princes that led to the eclipse of the imāmate in the Yemen at a time when *kilma wāḥida* united action, was ever the more necessary in the face of external pressures, notably Nasser's ambitions to extend his power to the southern end of the Red Sea. Imām Aḥmad had, in his day, succeeded in foiling his brothers' ambitions, but al-Ḥasan, the eldest and most capable of them, was a far more acceptable candidate in the eyes of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn house for the throne than Aḥmad's son, Muḥammad al-Badr, whose personality and policies they deemed unsuitable to the Yemen. Al-Badr, though made heir-apparent, feared al-Ḥasan's ambitions and support by powerful northern tribes - so, as a young man of his times, he sought support in Nasser and the young officer group of the Yemeni army who became subverted by the Egyptian officers al-Badr introduced to train them at the Military Academy at Ṣanʿā'. Though warned of their conspiracies he did not take the prompt action against them that characterised his father's deeds. Besieged by his disloyal young officers in his mansion in Ṣanʿā' he escaped with a handful of loyal followers from Ṣanʿā' and made for the north, intending to rally the tribes to his aid in the traditional manner.

In its early stages the Republic had a strong anti-Hāshimite strain, though there were Sayyids among the rebel officers. On the first Friday after the coup it was said to a man, actually of the Qāḍī class, *«Lā kanāwis baʿd al-yawm,* There wont be any turbans after today». This was in allusion to the ulema «turbaned» class of Sayyids and Quḍāt. The Quḍāt families in the Yemen are distinguished by

the hereditary designation of *qāḍī,* literally «judge», and form a group of Yemeni aristocracy the members of which are often Ulema filling administrative and sometimes military offices. About this time also the Jumhūrīs demanded Sayyids, especially officials, be handed over by Ahnūm. The Ahnūmīs refused, saying *«hijra la-nā fī-him»* and beat off Republican attacks. Certain of the extremist officers had already murdered many leading Sayyid high officials in Ṣanᶜā᾽.

The many enemies Aḥmad's tough policies had made were now able to raise their heads - these included not a few of the great tribal lords. When al-Badr arrived at Ḍilaᶜ Hamdān, a little outside Ṣanᶜā᾽, as he described to me in the cave at al-Qāra, the place of the Shaykh of Hamdān, ᶜĀṭif al-Muṣallī, he appealed to him for support, *bi-ḥaqq al-qabyala,* tribal honour, though ᶜĀṭif was described to me by others as a great *muthawwir,* pro-revolutionary. He sat with him an hour and ᶜĀṭif gave him mounts *(qurāsh),* equipment and thirty soldiers, and set him up to go on his way. Later ᶜĀṭif came to Ṣanᶜā᾽ and the officers asked him, «Why did you help al-Badr?» ᶜĀṭif replied that he was obliged to do so by *qabyala,* so they shot him in Liberation Street (Shāriᶜ al-Taḥrīr). This brought in his son Muḥammad (whom I met in Rimaᶜ in 1983) on al-Badr's side.

Sallāl, the non-tribal chief of al-Badr's staff, I am told, was in touch with him just before he left and advised him to go to Ḥajjah and rally support there with Ḥāshid, but he was unable to do so, being prevented by the Republicans with tanks. His appeal to ᶜAbdullāh al-Aḥmar of Ḥāshid whose father had backed him in 1959, was rejected in insulting terms - the execution of his father and brother when under Imām Aḥmad's safe-conduct rankled bitterly[106] and I suppose could be regarded as setting up a blood-feud with the Ḥamīd al-Dīn. Sinān Abū Luḥūm of Nihm and the Shāyif chief of Baraṭ were also hostile to the Ḥamīd al-Dīn. On the other hand, Nājī b. ᶜAlī al-Ghādir of Khawlān, though he had been put down by Imām Aḥmad, when he went to Ṣanᶜā᾽ to see what was happening there found the Sallāl-Bayḍānī régime so distasteful that he joined the Royalist side.

At first the tribes supporting the Imām seem to have fought without payment. The Royalists maintain that the Republicans started bribery and when the tribal Mashāyikh came in to Ṣanᶜā᾽ President Sallāl gave the tribes money and weapons - which many of them used against the Republic immediately after leaving the city. Sallāl invited the Mashāyikh to come to Ṣanᶜā᾽ and would hand them 2,000 to 3,000 riyals as a bribe, a large sum in those days - some would not even accept this. Nasser's political officers certainly distributed money and weapons to tribes. As the war dragged on and Saᶜūdī money as well poured into the country a tribe or sub-section would often *tamaylak* or *tajamhar* as it took a subsidy from one or the other side. Like the Ottomans, Nasserite forces could not maintain their hold of large areas of tribal country. When they withdrew most tribes

106. This was clear when I discussed his reply to al-Badr with him in Beirut.

tamaylak though not all. In my experience an internal division could split tribal allegiance into Royalist and Jumhūrī though they would not fight each other.

In 1964 tribesmen said to me that *«Bayt Ḥamīd al-Dīn hijra, bi-yad-hum al-ḥukm al-Nabawī,* The Ḥamīd al-Dīn House is *hijra* (which means they are bound to protect it), in their hand is the Prophet's rule/authority». We have complete belief in the Family of Muḥammad. To this was added that they either wanted a *ḥukm Nabawī Hāshimī,* Prophetic Hāshimite rule, or *kull qabīla taḥkum nafsa-hā,* each tribe should govern itself. The tribes, they said, dislike the government of individuals because they consider them (the Republican government in Ṣanᶜāᵓ was intended) *safala (= nāqiṣīn),* of low class. Tribes in the Ḥarīb area said they disliked *istiᶜmār al-Shawāfiᶜ,* Shāfiᶜī colonisation, alluding to the support given the Republic by the Shāfiᶜīs and perhaps to the settlement of numbers of Shāfiᶜīs in Ṣanᶜāᵓ after 1962. It is significant that Sallāl himself came from the Ṣanᶜāᵓ Sūq, the tribes despising *sūqīs.* They say *kalām ibn al-sūq* of a person whose word is not believed, but tribes pride themselves on not lying.

Nasser was obliged to withdraw his troops in 1967 and Royalist tribes invested Ṣanᶜāᵓ, but when victory seemed near,the dispute between al-Badr and most of the other Ḥamīd al-Dīn princes reasserted itself and the tribes grown accustomed to subsidies said with cynical humour that they wanted «half a victory» so that they might still enjoy bribes from both sides. On Jabal ᶜAybān west of Ṣanᶜāᵓ which they were occupying, Nājī b. ᶜAlī al-Ghādir, the war chief *(muqaddam ḥarb)* of Bakīl, told the energetic prince Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn that he would see Ṣanᶜāᵓ but never enter it, meaning he would support him no further than that. Perhaps the other tribal Mashāyikh may have felt they would not like to see a strong Imām return to power. Al-Badr was blamed by the princes for ignoring the threat posed by Nasser's intrigues in the Yemen and there was no united front. Finally the intervention of communist supported exernal forces, including Russian planes - a Russian pilot was brought down in Jaḥāna - against unenthusiastic tribes who had suffered much from YAR bombers and in whom the Saᶜūdīs had lost interest, meant that the Ḥamīd al-Dīn's opportunity was lost, though one of the princes held out near Ṣaᶜda till killed. The tribes could probably have checked the invaders in the mountain passes had the will been there.

Under the Republic the position of the Zaydī tribes is still strong and they receive subsidies as in the days of the Imāms - the Republic has to rely on Ḥāshid and Bakīl for its defence. What will happen in the greatly changing economic circumstances in the YAR is another chapter.

A great deal of fiction has been fabricated to show that the Imāms foster the belief in their supernatural powers. Hostile propaganda averred that at al-Qāra al-Badr used to fake miraculous appearances of himself. This, I am sure, is plain nonsense, as is the tale that Imām Aḥmad would tie a cord round his neck to make his eyes protrude - this is a physical feature I have remarked in his close relatives. The Sayyids in general are widely believed to have the power of summoning the

Jinn to serve them.[107] As the tribes believe in these supernatural powers of the Imāms, YAR planes bombed the tombs of past Imāms at Ẓafīr Ḥajja, Al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Murtaḍā and his son, but it was pointed out to me they had suffered little damage! A belief is, or was, current in the Yemen that one must have an Imām for when a man dies it will be said to him, «Now you are dead who was your Imām? *(mutt al-ān wa-man kān imām-ak)*»[108]. Imāms were believed to have power to heal humans or animals - this belief goes back a long way and the curious case is recorded of a sick man eating the seal on a letter from al-Hādī and being restored to health.[109]

Many believed that Imām Ahmad was *muṣarraf,* i.e. that bullets or swords would not penetrate his body[110] and perhaps Imām Aḥmad may have believed this himself. Educated persons however affirmed to me that neither the Imām nor the princes (Suyūf) were *muṣarraf*[111]. Imām Aḥmad's amazing escapes certainly encouraged the notion that he was *muṣarraf* and if he did nothing to dispel it, both he and al-Badr were surely too intelligent to fake wonders.

Customary law and the tribes

Though the Zaydī Imāms from al-Hādī onwards have endeavoured to replace tribal law by *sharīᶜa* the latter was only applied outside the towns when the Imāms were strong enough to enforce it. Ibn al-Mujāwir[112] writing in the 7th/12th century states that the Arabs of the Mountains and Tihāmas to the borders of the Hijaz do not accept the *sḥarᶜ* but *ḥukm al-manᶜ* which he recognizes as undoubtedly the law of the Jāhiliyya. It may be remarked that the term *sharᶜ* itself as commonly used in the countryside means a customary law, not *sharīᶜa*. The history *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*[113] writing in the 12th/18th century alludes to the laws of Baraṭ, presumably of Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn of Bakīl. I have also been informed that in the hands of five groups of Bakīl there is a kind of written code called *al-Sabᶜa al-Qawānīn,* the Seven Canons, upon which their laws are based and that the whole area in the north is judged only by *ᶜurf* which, it was stated, is quicker and honester than the *(sharīᶜa)* courts. The Seven Canons are perhaps to be identified with the laws of Baraṭ already mentioned. Last century the Makramī Amīr of the Yām tribe gave the ᶜAlawī Sayyids of Ḥaḍramawt who,

107. Qāsim Ghālib et al., *Ibn al-Amīr wa-ᶜaṣru-ṣu,* Beirut, 1969, 139, speaks of the miracles *(karāmāt)* of each Imām through the services of the Jinn and the help of the angels. The hostility of this book to the Imāms is well known.

108. Cf. the belief among Ḥaḍramī Ṣūfīs that one must have a shaykh to find favour with the Almighty (The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt, in *Studies in Arabian history...* No. viii, 13).

109. *Sīrah,* 139.

110. Al-Shāmī, op.cit., 34, 74.

111. *Ṣurf* was defined to me as *taᶜwīḍ min al-Jinn.* A woman would say to her child, *Ṣarraf minnak kull shayṭān,* May every devil be averted from you.

112. *Tārīkh al-mustabṣīr, Descriptio Arabiae Meridionalis,* ed. O. Löfgren, Uppsala, 1951-54.

113. ᶜAbdullāh b. ᶜAlī al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā wa-ṣiḥāf al-mann wa-ʾl-salwā,* Chester Beatty Arabic Ms. 4097, 46b, 63b.

led by the ᶜAṭṭās, were attempting to establish a pilgrimage route to Mecca, an *ᶜahd,* pact, called *qāᶜida mujawwira* - this may provide a clue to the Seven Canons, since the *Kitāb Lawāzim al-manᶜa*[114] commences with a chapter on *jiwār,* and othersdeal with *rifāq, ḥalīf, ṣulḥ,* etc., and the Seven Canons are almost certain to cover this range of topics. Perhaps the *sijills* of the tribes to which al-Hamdānī alludes also deal with legal principles.

In Imām Yaḥyā's day, I am informed, the tribal law codes of the type found by Ettore Rossi, if found in a man's possession could bring about his execution - they were said also to exist in Khawlān and Kuḥlān. They give the impression of a society completely independent of the central power in its ethics and organisation, without *qāḍīs* but with arbiters and mediators. The extract from the corpus I am editing containsthe following section

What is due to the masters/chiefs *(makhādīm)*

They are sultans, chiefs, those responsible for the payment of blood-money *(ghuramāʾ)*[115], those in authority over their tribes *(al-mālikūn li-ᶜashāᶜiri-him),* those with whom a pact of security *(amāna)* has been contracted and who have been entrusted with authority[116], and what is allowable to him[117] and what is not. You must know that any tribe swearing *(yaḥlifūn)* to a man to hear and obey *(ᶜala ʾl-samᶜ waʾl-ṭāᶜa),* and they commit an offence *(yakhtiyūn),* are obliged to render amends[118].

A *ḥākim* must judge according to *sharᶜ* in the place of *sharᶜ* and *manᶜ* in what is appropriate in judging by *manᶜ*[119]. No one may judge by *manᶜ* unless he has *manᶜ, manᶜ* seeming basically to mean the power to protect and restrain. The testimony of men of religion *(ahl al-dīn)* is given precedence over that of others.

The celebrated scholar al-Shawkānī attacks the Dhū Ḥusayn and Dhū Muḥammad of Barat for submitting «to the customary laws of their predecessors *(aḥkām al-ṭāghūt)*» but he applies this criticism to the Yemenis of the North (al-Qibla) and the East (al-Mashriq) who have not come under the control of the *dawla.* They are even worse than the subjects *(raᶜāyā)* under the control of the *dawla,* authority, «who cannot pray, or pray incorrectly». Following the *Ṭāghūt* these tribal areas deprive women of their inheritance, and if they follow *sharīᶜa* they do so reluctantly, or resisting it or acting unlawfully or show disdain for it[120].

114. Described in «Materials for South Arabian history» II, *BSOAS,* London, 1950, xiii, iii, 590 seq.

115. Seemingly the same as *ḍāmin,* sometimes one finds both used together, *gharīm ḍāmin.*

116. Reading *wulāt al-amr* or possibly *wallā-huʾl-amr.*

117. The Arabic of the text is not well constructed; «*him*» may be rendered as «them».

118. This passage is taken from Yaḥyā b. Ḥabl (?) al-Qaḥṭānī of Arḍ al-Bayāḍ whom I have been unable to identify, but he may be of the Qaḥṭān between Najrān and ᶜAsīr. (Rossi, 26r). Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī b. Zinbāᶜ (Rossi coll.) says, *Man qad nuṣiba li-ʾl-amr wa-ʾl-nahy wa-ᶜuqida lahu dhālika aw akhadha-hu biʾl-qudra - law kāna mālik-an li-ᶜashīrati-hi milk-an mashhūr-an fa-laysa li-aḥad-in an yajūr ᶜalay-hi* (understand with Lane, *fī ḥukmi-hi) wa-lā yaᶜtariḍ la-hu fī ᶜashīrati-hi.*

119. So al-Qaḥṭānī, who does include this in a section *Adab al-Qāḍī,* but perhaps this is simply with the intention of setting *manᶜ* in an Islamic framework.

120. Al-ᶜAmrī, op.cit., 211; cf. 146.

In the *manᶜa* element in *Ṭāghūt* there is little in the corpus positively un-Islamic, but practices like *bishᶜa,* trial by ordeal, are condemned by the ulema. The term itself does not seem to be opprobrious as used by the tribes and means both the arbiters who administer it and the law itself.[121] Disapproval of the ulema apart, recourse to the *Ṭāghūt* eats into the power of the centralizing authority of the Imāms, and Yaḥyā on the Turkish withdrawal in 1337/1918-19 immediately set about «cleansing the country of *ḥukm al-Ṭāghūt al-qabalī* dominating with its ignorance and error over minds and spirits». He delegated this to his son Aḥmad who to a large degree, there seems little doubt, did manage to suppress it openly at least, but Yemenis in Aden told me ordinary folk avoided the courts and had recourse to *muṣliḥs,* conciliators, as much as possible - *qāḍīs* in the Aden Protectorates had also the reputation for corruption as in the Yemen. So «clipping the nails of the *Ṭāghūt*» is the policy of the Imāms and of their centralization of power in the cities.

Summoning the tribes

A *ṣārikh,* or call for aid, will be sent to a tribe, perhaps with *ᶜaqīras,* animals slaughtered to put a compulsion on the tribe to rise. Landberg[122] says they must be cows or camels. It is the *dawshān,* a sort of *maddāḥ*[123] who stirs up the tribes *(yuthawwir al-qabāʾil).* For this purpose *dawshāns* and *muzayyins* are sent to *rās al-ᶜaqaba,*the head of the pass, and the *muzayyin* beats the drum while the *dawshān* calls *(yiṣīḥ), Ḥayyā-kum yā qabāyil qūmū li-ʾl-jihād - jāhidū ᶜala ʾl-sharaf wa-ᶜala ʾl-karāma wa-ᶜala ʾl-waṭan wa-ᶜalā Amīr al-Muʾminīn wa-nuṣrat al-ḥaqq wa-iqāmat al-dīn min al-ᶜaduww al-dākhil fi ʾl-waṭan.* (This particular *ᶜaduww* was the Nasserite troops in 1964) Such lively addresses stir up the *nakhwa aṣīla,* noble pride of the tribes and the action is an *ᶜāda mujarraba.* A proclamation will be made *(ᶜamalū ẓāhira)* by a *dawshān* with the *muzayyin* at the drum, to assemble the tribe with a formula such as *«Yaqūl al-qabīla al-fulāniyya inna-hum badaᶜū baᶜḍ al-baᶜḍ li-ʾl-ijtimāᶜ».* When a proclamation of war is made in Khawlān they carry wood to the summit of al-Ṭiyāl mountains and light a beacon to raise all the Khawlān tribes. A *shaykh jihād* may be appointed to conduct the war, but he would not necessarily be a *shaykh qabīlah.* When the Imāms sent to the tribes for a levy for the army (not necessarily in time of war) the levy was termed *ḍarībat dam,* a blood tax, and a money contribution for the same purpose *buqshat al-bāṭil.* The *hijar* Sayyids were exempt from either. In tribal law a tribesman serving as a soldier with the government did not set up a blood-feud against his tribe if he

121. Shaykh ᶜAbdullāh Khamīs told me in al-Riyāḍ some years ago that *Ṭāghūt* was a judge in tribal matters not drawn from special families, but chosen for impartiality and such like qualities. He would sometimes judge by *firāsa,* perspicacity, intuition. The term in Saᶜūdī Arabia did not seem to convey any pejorative attitude to the practice.

122. *Ḥaḍramoût,* Leiden, 1901, 459 seq.

123. He is of non-tribal status.

killed a man - the government was responsible and a tribesman might therefore avenge himself on any government official, high or low.

What surprises one in the Yemen is the quick switches of allegiances; a tribe might be fighting for the Imām one time, but be attacked or attacking him the next.

In Imām Aḥmad's day a small group of tribesmen with their leader, unable to maintain a livelihood in the Zaydī north would come to the Imām asking to be engaged as soldiers. The Imām might send them to a Shāfiʿī district where they acted as a garrison and were used to enforce tax collection. In one sense this solved a problem but the Zaydī tribal soldier was not loved there.

★ ★ ★

In conclusion it may be observed that internally in the Yemen there is a seesawing tension between the tribes who desire *de facto* independence of the centralizing authority and the Imāms who exercise that authority - yet the tribes cannot dispense with the existence of such an authority. The centralised authority wishes to destroy or reduce local power and to replace the ancient customary law of the tribes by Islamic law. The literature on the other hand, while recording the interplay of tribe and Imām, the actual events, does not care much to examine the underlying reasons for tribal actions, and is much concerned with controversy among the sects and the ulema, supporting or criticizing the policies of the Imāms. It was of course the ulema who wrote the histories and their view of the tribes is unsympathetic, urban and sometimes aloof. The civilisation of the countryside and tribal society seems of minor interest to historians though in legal texts one finds material relating to custom, especially where it clashes with theories held by the ulema.

Bibliographical Note

The main written source has been the relevant chapters in R.B. Serjeant & Ronald Lewcock, *Ṣanʿāʾ; an Arabian Islamic city,* which should be consulted for detailed information, and articles reprinted in my *Studies in Arabian history and civilisation,* London, 1982, notably *«Ḥaram* and *ḥawṭah:* the sacred enclave in Arabia», «South Arabia» which deals with the social structure of western Arabia, «The *Sunna Jāmiʿa...* analysis and translation of the documents comprised in the so-called «Constitution of Medina»,» «The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt». Aḥmad al-Shāmī's *Imām al-Yaman, Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn* has been much relied upon, and *Dāmighat al-dawāmigh,* Hertford, 1967. My «The Yemeni poet al-Zubayrī and his polemic against the Zaydī Imāms» in *Arabian studies* is background for the modern period, and Ettore Rossi's invaluable «Il diritto consuetudinario...» and my own edition of *Kitāb Lawāzim al-manʿa* have provided much of the tribal background, and of course Carl Rathjens, «Ṭāghūt gegen ʾscheriʿaʾ», *Jahrbuch des Linden-Museums,* Stuttgart, 1951. I have also consulted I. Goldfeld, *The tribal policy of the Prophet Muḥammad,* Cambridge Ph.D thesis, 1970, which is informative though I do not entirely concur in some of the conclusions.

Appendix I

خطبة الإمام أحمد في حديدة سنة ١٩٥٩

إخواني وأولادي سلمكم الله!

أحييكم تحيةً حارة منبعثةً من سويدآء القلب، إجلالاً لكم واعترافًا بما قُمتم بَه من الثبات على الموالاة والمودّة، وعدم الانصياع وتصديق الأشرار أهل الفساد الذين يريدون الإخلال بالأمن وإخافة الطريق والشَّوْفَة والفتنة والظلم والسير بلا حياء من الله ولا مراقبه لَه.

وقد سبق في علم الله أنه سيكون خروج إمامكم إلى الخارج للمعالجة والاستشفآء. والآن قد عُدْتُ إليكم في صحّة جيّدة* وعافية كاملة ــ أحمد الله وأشكره على نِعَمه الوافية ــ وأحيّي شعبي اليمني الباسل الثابت على الدين والولآء والمودّة، والسكون والاطمئنان، والتجنّب من النصارى وأعوانهم ــ أحيّي شعبي العزيز الذي لاحقتني برقياته إلى حيث كنت يسألون عن صحتي وعافيتي. وما هذا إلّا دليل رايع على صدق المحبّة والمودّة ــ والحمد لله رب العالمين. وقد كان ما كان من بعض السفهآء والأشرار المغرورين المخذولين، فأخافوا الأمن في تعزّ فقتلوا النفس الحرام، ونهبوا الأموال، وأخافوا السبيل، أخافوا بَيْضة الإسلام التي يلجأ إليها الخايفون ــ ولا قوّة إلّا بالله!

لقد كان لذلك في نفسي من الأسف والأَسَى ما لا أقدر أن أعبّرُ عنه؛ ولكن، الحمد لله، خيّب الله آمالهم، وأذلّهم وأرجعهم منكوبين.

وها أنا الآن عازمٌ على تنفيذ أحكام الله في أولائك أهل الفتنة ــ منهم من سيُضْرَب عُنُقه عملاً بكتاب الله وشريعة رسول الله**، ومنهم من ستُقَطَّع أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ من خِلافٍ ــ شريعة الله ــ شريعة محمد بن عبد الله ــ شريعة النبي الذي جآء بهذا الدين والاسلام!

وأُحذّر الحاضرين ــ والحاضر يَعْلِم [كذا] الغائب ــ أنّني أُقسِم بالله قَسَماً لا هَوَادَةَ فيه أنّه لا يُرْفَع إلَيَّ بحقّ عن أيّ شخص، كان من أبيض[124] [كذا] أو أسود* يسْعَى في الإخلال بالأمن، وإخافة الضُعَفَا، ومخالفة الأوامر، والتنكّب عن شريعة الله* ــ لا يَبْلُغني ذلك عن أيّ فرد، عن أيّ شخص كائنًا من كان، إلّا جَزَزْتُ راسه بالسيف*؛ وأقول مكرّرًا مُحَذّرًا[125] ــ ومن كذّب فليجرّب ــ وهذا الفَرَسُ وهذا الميدان!*

أما علمتم أنّ النصارى وأذنابهم وخَدَمَة الكافرين يسعَوْن بكل جدّهم وبكل جهدهم، بلا كَلَلٍ ولا مَلَل، يقصدون تفريق الكلمة؛ وتشتيت الجماعة، وقطع السبيل، ومخالفة الإمام، ومخالفة شريعة الله؟*** وإنّ الواقعة التي كانت في تعزّ، والتي كانت في صنعآء لم تكن بنت ساعتها،

124. Note the Imām's faulty grammar! In places he lapses into colloquial forms.
125. Unclear, translated as if *muḥadhdhir-an* is read.

ولكنها مدبَّرة من الخارج. والدليل على هذا أنّه قد وُجد بعض الذهب مع بعض المخذولين المغرورين... حجّة واضحة لا شكّ فيها ولا مِرْيَه. فهل يُرْضيكم مثل هذا*؟ هل ترضَوْن بالسفهآء والأشرار أن يتحمّلون [كذا] المستعمرين على ظهورهم إلى وطننا العزيز يُريدون إذلالَه وإذلال الشعب اليمني الباسل؟

فقد كانت تلك آية من الله سبحانه وتعالى أظهر فيها ما هو الشعب اليمني وما هورجاله، ثابتون على الدين، ثابتون على الموالاة، ثابتون على أمر الإمام وطاعته، لم يغترّوا بالذهب، ولم يغترّوا بالكلام المعسول الذي أوّله حَلاوة وآخره نارٌ وظلم.

إخواني وأولادي ــ أستودعكم الله وأخْلُدوا إلى السكينة والاطمئنان*؛ ولا تخافوا، ولا تقلقوا ــ فإنّي حريص على أمانكم وراحتكم ولو أضحّي بنفسي!

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

Supplementary note

A valuable source not drawn upon for this paper is *Ḥawliyyāt Yamāniyyah min sanat 1224 ilā sanat 1316; aw al-Yaman fī-'l-qarn al-tāsiᶜ ᶜashar al-mīlādī*, ed. ᶜAbdullāh Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī, Ṣanᶜāᵓ, n.d., but author's preface dated Adhār 1980, Wizārat al-iᶜlām publications. The interplay of the rivals for the imāmate, the citizens of Ṣanᶜāᵓ and the northern tribes is richly illustrated in this chronicle year by year. The text is in need however of full annotation to cover the senses of Yemeni words and expressions not explained by the editor.

Appendix II

Imām Aḥmad's Speech at Hodeidah, 1959

My brothers and sons, God deliver you.

I greet you a warm greeting that springs from the bottom of my heart, from esteem for you and in recognition of what you have accomplished in the way of steadfast loyalty and affection *(mawadda)*, and in not harkening to and believing the evil men - those who would (create) dissension, who want to upset (public) security, make the road(s) and women *(al-shawfa)* unsafe, to (create) trouble *(fitna)* and injustice, and to carry on without shame before God or heed of Him.

It was foreknown to God in His wisdom[126] that your Imām would go abroad for (medical) treatment and hospitalization. And now I have returned to you in excellent health (CHEERS) and full of strength! I praise God and thank him for his bountiful favours! I greet my Yemeni people *(shaᶜb)*, steadfast in (their) religion, loyalty, affection, calm and tranquility, their avoidance of the Christians and their aides. I greet my noble people whose telegrams reached me where I was, enquiring after my health and strength. This is an impressive indication of (their) true love and affection *(al-maḥabba wa-ʾl-mawadda)* - Praise God, Lord of the Worlds!

There took place what there did on the part of some foolish irresponsibles and deluded abandoned evil-doers - they upset (public) security in Taᶜizz and murdered a sacred human life - they plundered property, made roads unsafe and rendered unsafe the territory of Islām to which those in fear take refuge - There is no power but in God![127]

On account of this there is in my heart such grief that I cannot bear to express, but, God be praised, God has frustrated their hopes, humbled them and sent them back in distress.

And here am I now - resolved to put into execution the laws of God upon those trouble-makers! Some of them will have their heads struck off in accordance with the Book of God and the law *(sharīᶜa)* of the Apostle of God (LOUD CHEERS). And some of them «will have their hands and legs cut off from alter-

126. He means it was written *fi ʾl-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ*, in the Preserved Tablet.

127. The Imām in using this phrase is putting himself in a strong challenging position against his opponents.

nate sides» (Qurʾān, V,33)[128] - the *sharīʿa* of God, the *sharīʿa* of Muḥammad b. ʿAbdullāh, the *sharīʿa* of the Prophet who brought this religion and Islām!

I warn those present here - and let him who is present tell him who is absent,[129] that I swear by God an oath without remission that no case *(ḥaqq)* will be submitted to me concerning any person, be he of white or black (CHEERS), attempting to breach (public) security, to upset the security of[130] those who do not bear arms *(duʿafāʾ)*, to disobey orders and deviate from the *sharīʿa* of God (CHEERS) - I shall not hear this of any individual or any person, be who it may, but I shall strike off his head with the sword (CHEERS). (This) I say repeating and warning[131]. Whosoever says (this is) a lie - let him try! This is the horse and here the battlefield! (CHEERS)[132]

Don't you know that the Christians,[133] their tails and the servants of the infidels, are striving might and main, neither flagging nor faltering, seeking to divide the unity (of the Yemen) and break up the body (politic), to cut the road(s), [to foster] disobedience to the Imām and to the *Sharīʿa* of God (CONTINUOUS CHEERS)...[134] The incident in Taʿizz and that in Ṣanʿāʾ did not take place on the spur of the moment but was hatched from outside. The pointer to this is that some gold was found with certain abandoned deluded persons... a clear proof with no doubt or argument about it. Does such a thing as this win your approval? (CRIES of «No» and BOOING) Will you consent that irresponsible fools and evil men should bear the colonialists on their backs to our beloved homeland, wishing to humiliate it and bring the courageous Yemeni populace into subjection?

This has been a sign from God, Praised and Exalted, whereby he made manifest what the Yemeni populace *(shaʿb)* is and what its men are - steadfast in the faith, steadfast in loyalty, steadfast in (obedience) to the Imām's commands and in obeying him, not deluded by gold, not deluded by honied words the first of which are sweetness and the last of them Hell and oppression! (CHEERS)

My brothers and my sons, I consign you to God - so abide forever in (God's) peace and tranquillity. Fear not nor be troubled, for I am intent on your security and well-being, though I were to sacrifice myself (to achieve it)!

Peace upon you and God's mercy and blessings.

128. The quotation says this is to be the penalty of those who fight God and his Apostle and work up dissension *(fasād)* in the land.

129. A traditional formula at public announcements which remounts to pre-Islamic times.

130. *Ikhāfa,* causing fear, but used in sense of insecurity.

131. Recording unclear, see f.n. 125.

132. Al-ʿIzzī Ṣāliḥ al-Sinaydār, *Amthāl Yamaniya wa-fukāhāt Ṣanʿāniyya,* Aden (?), 18/vi/61, ii, 9, cites a proverb, *Farasāk wa-ʾl-maydān.*

133. The Imām means the British, and by ≪tails≫ probably the Aden Protectorate sultans, but as al-Shāmī said, they had nothing to do with this situation.

134. Continuous cheering makes the Imām, if speaking, inaudible.